

Cognition

An Introduction
to Hegel's
Phenomenology of Spirit

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This is a companion volume to my introduction to Hegel.^[1] It is intended as an introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, his first, perhaps greatest work, arguably the most important philosophical treatise of the nineteenth century. Although one of the greatest of all philosophical classics, it is a dark book that yields its secrets only slowly.

In preparing this volume, I have tried to strike a balance between detail, intelligibility, and finding a way into the work as a whole. The resultant compromise deals with the entire text while omitting much of the detail that is properly the focus, often the main focus, of scholars. I have not tried to say more than absolutely needs to be said to help readers find a way into the book. The scholarly apparatus is limited to indicating just enough of Hegel's other writings and of the secondary literature to aid readers interested in pursuing various issues in more detail. The discussion mainly follows Hegel's exposition, paragraph by paragraph, and, when it appears to be necessary, sentence by sentence. My aim is to help readers who are not Hegel scholars, although they may have considerable knowledge of philosophy, as well as others who may have only a general philosophical background to read the text of the *Phenomenology* with comprehension. For the most part I have refrained from criticizing Hegel's theory, not because it is beyond criticism, but because my aim here is limited to introducing it.

The *Phenomenology* is difficult to comprehend, particularly for a first-time reader, since it is not even clear what it is about. Hegel's treatise is a good example of what he famously calls "the Bacchanalian revel in

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which no member is not drunk."^[2] Wilhelm Windelband's observation many years ago that the generation capable of understanding this book was disappearing is almost a truism.^[3] It is said that there is no unitary interpretation of the work.^[4] It has been suggested that no

single interpretation can be adequate.^[5] It has been claimed that there is no unity to the book since its transitions are merely arbitrary.^[6]

Any reading of the *Phenomenology* requires an overall view of the book as a whole. At present, there is an emerging awareness of epistemological themes in Hegel.^[7] I will be following Adolf Krister Phalén^[8] and more recent writers such as Kenneth Westphal,^[9] Robert Solomon,^[10] and Terry Pinkard^[11] who see Hegel as an epistemological thinker. Perhaps no one denies that aspects of the *Phenomenology*, above all the early chapters, concern knowledge. The present reading differs from others mainly in holding that the work as a whole, with its many topics, can be read as a unified epistemological theory. I contend that, following Hegel's suggestion, we should comprehend his entire book as a single theory of knowledge running through different phases from cognition (*Erkennen*) to absolute knowing.

A special feature of this book is the attention devoted to the relation between Hegel and other thinkers, both earlier and later, as an aid in comprehending his theory. There is no alternative to understanding Hegel against the background of prior philosophy, since he knew it well and consciously reacted against it. There is frequently no better clue to Hegel's own view than his reading of other views. He consistently attempts to take up in his position all that is positive in the prior philosophical tradition. His theory clearly reflects his desire to enter into dialogue with the entire preceding philosophical tradition. To an often unsuspected extent, much of later philosophy consists in a dialogue with Hegel.^[12] It is often easier to understand aspects of his theory when we see how later thinkers react to them.

Particular attention is paid to Hegel's relation to German idealism, within which his theory emerged, including Fichte and Schelling but especially Kant. His reading of the critical philosophy is often decisive for the formulation of his own position. He reads Fichte and Schelling, his great contemporaries, in terms of their contribution to the further development of Kant's line of thought.

In the *Phenomenology*, perhaps even more than elsewhere in his writings, Kant is constantly present to Hegel at every step of the discussion. Hegel is critical of Kant, since he holds that the latter's critical philosophy, strictly interpreted, leads to skepticism. Yet it would be a mistake

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to regard Hegel as breaking decisively with his great predecessor. Kant distinguishes between the spirit and the letter of a theory.^[13] Hegel regards the spirit of the critical philosophy as speculative idealism. In rejecting Kant's own form of empiricism, more precisely in rejecting the Kantian conception of the thing-in-itself presupposed in the critical philosophy, he defends and develops its spirit against its letter.

It is important to see that Hegel defends Kant's transcendental form of idealism, suitably modified, even against Kant. In that specific sense, Hegel can be said to be faithful to Kant's critical theory, hence to remain a Kantian. Hegel was aware of his permanent debt to Kant. Even in the *Science of Logic*, when he had already come into his own as a major thinker well on the way to eclipsing all his rivals, Hegel clearly says that "the Kantian philosophy... constitutes the base and the starting point of recent German philosophy and its merit remains unaffected by whatever faults may be found in it."^[14]

Like Kant, Hegel is mainly concerned with knowledge, although not necessarily with theory of knowledge as we understand it. Two central Hegelian insights about knowledge can be anticipated with respect to Kant. The first concerns our access to the cognitive object. Kant famously distinguishes between an object given in experience, what he calls an appearance, and an object given only in thought, what he calls a thing-in-itself. The problem of knowledge requires an explanation of the relation between the appearance and what appears, which Kant expressed as a question: "What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation to the object'?"^[15]

In reaction to Kant, Hegel maintains that a coherent account of the relation of an appearance to an independent external object is impossible. I take him to be saying that if knowledge requires a comparison between an object as it appears and as it is in itself in independence of us, then knowledge is impossible. We can never compare what is in our mind with anything outside it, but only with something else that it is given to, hence within, mind. In more contemporary terms, Hegel is rejecting any form of the correspondence view of truth, roughly the claim that a belief is true if it corresponds to an independent fact. We cannot know facts, objects, or anything else other than as they appear within consciousness. According to Hegel, we reach knowledge when our view of the object and the object as it is

given to us, or is within mind, coincide. The introduction to the book is devoted to making this point, central to Hegel's view of knowledge.

Hegel's second insight is expounded in a series of chapters, running

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from "Self-Consciousness" through "Reason" to "Spirit," where he revises the view of the subject of knowledge. In modern philosophy, thinkers from Descartes to Kant, Husserl, and many contemporary analytic thinkers from Frege to Davidson, from another perspective Habermas, and so on, invoke a "thin," or "minimalist," concept of the cognitive subject, conceived in terms of the requirements of the idea of knowledge they defend. A conception of the subject defined in terms of a normative view of knowledge should not be conflated with a person. In the wake of the French Revolution, Fichte innovates in reconceiving the cognitive subject as a human being. Following Fichte, Hegel further innovates in working out a theory of knowledge based on individual human beings as the cognitive subject. His concept of spirit is roughly a view of people in the sociohistorical context as the real subject of knowledge.

A special feature of this study is the unusually large number of quotations, intended to link it closely to Hegel's text. Although this study can be read on its own, it is my intention to help the reader follow Hegel's work by keying my remarks whenever possible to specific passages in the *Phenomenology*.

This feature requires a remark about the available English translations. Hegel, who magisterially exploits the resources of the German language of his day, is not easy to render into English. It is something of a mystery why the nineteenth-century English philosophical community that relied on such translations as William Wallace's rendering of the *Encyclopedia*,^[16] surely one of the weakest of all translations of a philosophical classic, ever became interested in Hegel at all.

We currently have two translations of the *Phenomenology* into English. The first, J. B. Baillie's,^[17] appeared in 1910 and in revised form in 1931; the second, A. V. Miller's, appeared in 1977. According to Lawrence Stepelevich, writing after the appearance of the Miller translation, it is difficult to conceive of a better translation than Baillie's.^[18] In fact, neither translation is more than minimally acceptable. Baillie's translation of *Geist* as "mind" suggests links to English empiricism, particularly philosophy of mind, which run against the grain of Hegel's thought. Miller, the most recent translator, was philosophically unsophisticated. His rendering of *Begriff* as "notion" makes this crucial term sound trivial. His translation of *Herrschaft* and *Knechtschaft*, what Baillie calls "lord" and "bondsman," as "lordship" and "bondage" is not only not better but, from the perspective of present usage, suggests a sexual or perhaps even a legal connotation wholly foreign to Hegel's text. Miller

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occasionally introduces words into the translation that are not in the text at all. In his translation of "die *ansichseiende*, vom Selbst unterschiedne Substanz" (§640) on page 388 as "the substance which remains *in itself* or unexplicated," there is no warrant for the phrase "or unexplicated."

There is no easy alternative to relying on Miller's translation as it is the one most widely available at present. In practice, I have frequently modified his renderings to bring out, when possible in simpler language, Hegel's ideas. Each time I have altered a translation, I have marked it with an asterisk. I have routinely included one or more words from the German in brackets so that the reader with a knowledge of the language can better grasp what Hegel is saying.

Many of my changes are minor, relating mainly to an effort to simplify the English or to be closer to Hegel's text. Others concern the translation of important terms that recur throughout the book. Hence I have rendered *Begriff* as "concept," *Wesen* as "essence," not as "Being," *Vorstellen* as "representation," not as "picture-thinking," *aufheben* not as "to supersede" but as "to sublate," *an sich* not as "in principle" but as "in itself," and so on. Still other changes reflect basic disagreements about the interpretation of Hegel's text.

This book concentrates on a passage-by-passage account of the text of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Those interested in following Hegel's discussion throughout the *Phenomenology* should read this book through from the beginning. Since Hegel's famous preface is a kind of metatext commenting on the results of the main text, it might be better for those who will be reading the *Phenomenology* for the first time, in particular those without a solid background in German idealism, to begin with chapter 2, since Hegel's preface can

most profitably be read after reading his treatise. Those concerned with how I view the theory of knowledge he advances in the *Phenomenology* can proceed directly to chapters 9 and 10.

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Chapter 1 "Preface"

The preface to the *Phenomenology* was composed after the book, in which Hegel presented the first main installment of his mature theory, was completed. Here he comments on rival theories from the perspective of his own theory. This difficult text, which passes rapidly from topic to topic, can be read with greatest profit after reading the work it presents.¹ I begin with it here for two reasons. First, Hegel placed it first in his book. Second, the preface clearly indicates that he regards his own theory as a theory of cognition (*Erkennen*).

We can begin with a remark on the title of the book. Book titles are intended to attract attention as well as to indicate authorial intent. In this case, things are perhaps more complicated than they appear. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the title of the most recent translation, is merely one of three titles Hegel gave to his work.

The title of the book in German is *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. "Spirit" is a translation of the German *Geist*, which is also rendered into English as "mind." If *Geist* is translated as "spirit," then the original title of the book, *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*, describes it rather well. Hegel later changed the title to *Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit*, probably while he was writing the preface. The book itself is routinely known as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, an abbreviation of its title. Miller's recent translation fails to mention that the title he gives to the work is neither of those that Hegel himself chose.

Hegel's preface is widely recognized as an important text. There is a good deal of truth to the idea that whoever grasps its main ideas will

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have at least a fair grasp of the basic principles of Hegel's theory. Yet the preface is difficult to comprehend. Probably the main obstacle is that it simply cannot be comprehended, even through very careful study of the text, by remaining within it. It is not possible to follow more than the main ideas of the preface without at least some knowledge of the main text. Hegel here repeatedly introduces terms that he only defines and expounds in the body of the book. He puts his reader in the awkward situation of having to master the work it introduces as a condition of grasping it. And he puts the commentator in the equally awkward situation of being unable to elucidate ideas important for a grasp of the preface without anticipating the discussion to follow.

Other obstacles in comprehending the preface are more usual but no less real. Kant's emphasis on philosophy as systematic science is central to all the main post-Kantian idealists. Hegel is a highly systematic thinker. Yet it is often difficult, especially in the preface largely devoted to commenting after the fact on what Hegel thinks he has shown in the body of the work, to see the interrelation of the main themes. A further obstacle is Hegel's erudition, enormous by any standard. He read exceedingly widely and retained very well. His text, especially the preface, is literally laced with direct and often indirect references to others, especially to philosophers, above all to Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Many of these references are less than obvious to a reader not already deeply familiar with German idealism.

Hegel's famous preface was composed several months after the book was delivered to the printer. In the age of metaphilosophy, of second-order reflection on philosophy, the preface can be described as a kind of metatext, in which Hegel describes the text it prefaces while differentiating it from some main alternative to his approach to knowledge. It is possible to postpone discussion of the preface until after we have commented on the main text. Yet since Hegel here stresses very clearly the epistemological character of the book to follow, more so than later on in the book, to postpone its discussion would mean postponing a useful clue about the discussion until after it has occurred.

The preface is simply headed in the German edition by the word *Vorrede*, meaning "preface." But in the table of contents preceding the work, we find a fuller title for this text that Miller simply gives without comment in his translation as "Preface: On Scientific Cognition [Vom wissenschaftlichen Erkennen]." This title immediately calls attention to a cognitive intention that runs like a red thread throughout the entire book.

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The *Phenomenology* is composed in a sober, closely reasoned style, intended to communicate the result of years of silent thought. In his more lively preface, Hegel, with justified satisfaction, comments on the book in which, after a prolonged philosophical apprenticeship, he at last takes his place among the great thinkers of the age. Yet his announced intention to develop a theory of scientific cognition seems to be immediately threatened by the diverse nature of an exposition that touches in order on the intrinsic limitation of a philosophical preface, philosophical truth, philosophical science, mathematics, triadicity, substance becoming subject, conceptual thought, and so on.

Since Hegel intends to present a theory of scientific cognition, our efforts in reading the preface will be directed toward bringing together the various facets of the discussion around this central theme. Our task will be to show, without forcing the discussion, that Hegel's exposition here and in the main body of the book is centered on his distinctive view of knowledge.

Hegel begins the preface to the book, in effect prefacing its preface, with remarks on the very idea of a preface, whose limitations he notes.

It is customary to preface a work with an explanation of the author's aim, why he wrote the book, and the relationship in which he believes it to stand to other earlier or contemporary treatises on the same subject. In the case of a philosophical work, however, such an explanation seems not only superfluous but, in view of the nature of the subject-matter, even inappropriate and misleading. (§1, 1)

The intrinsic limitation of a philosophical preface derives from the nature of philosophy. In the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant, who claimed to be a critical thinker, typically felt no compunction in providing a dogmatic statement of his theory. Yet we cannot appropriately characterize philosophical science before it has emerged as the result of the discussion that only later yields its own subject matter (*die Sache selbst*) in its final results. These are simply unavailable for a preface that merely precedes the work. By implication, if this rule also applies to the critical philosophy, Kant's enterprise is hopelessly compromised.

Comparison of different philosophical works on the same theme suggests incorrectly that theories are either true or false, whereas we should rather see them as offering different perspectives on "the progressive development [Entwicklung] of the truth" (§2, 2*). In *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (= *Differenzschrift*),

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Hegel's first philosophical publication, he argues that every philosophical theory can be understood from a historical perspective.² Now drawing the consequences of that claim, he suggests the need to understand different philosophical views as partaking in a common enterprise, to which each belongs, on which they all depend, and in which they react to one another. This is also the basic insight of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he argues for a reading of the history of philosophy as a single, ongoing enterprise. Different philosophical theories are partially true, even if none is wholly satisfactory, or wholly true.

At most, a preface can offer a statement of aims of the work in which they are to be developed. It would be an error to conflate a statement of goals with reaching them, or the beginning of cognition with cognition, other than as a strategy to avoid the real issue: "For the real issue is not exhausted in its aim, but in its carrying it out, nor is the result the real whole, but rather the result together with its becoming" (§3, 2*).

In the remainder of the preface, Hegel characterizes scientific philosophy, beginning with its link to culture. Philosophy provides general principles valid throughout culture. For "the beginning and the development of culture from the immediacy of substantial life must always be made by acquiring universal basic principles [allgemeine Grundsätze] and points of view, so as at first to work up to the thought [Gedanke] of the real issue" (§4, 3*).

Universal basic principles, points of view, and analysis of so-called real issues point toward a conception of truth, to which Hegel now briefly turns. Following many others, including René Descartes, Kant insists on the idea of philosophy as a scientific system.³ Karl Leonhard Reinhold, a minor Kantian, is important as the first to begin the restatement of the

results of Kant's critical philosophy in the form of a system that Kant insisted on but that his early readers thought was lacking in his writing. The systematic restatement of the critical philosophy is a major theme in German idealism. Hegel, who was severely critical of Reinhold, attacks him as a leading representative of unphilosophy in the *Differenzschrift*. Reinhold speaks of love and faith in truth as necessary for philosophy. For Hegel, it is only when philosophy becomes science that it makes the transition from love of knowing to real knowing. In his famous deduction of the categories, Kant takes "deduction" to mean "exposition."⁴ For Hegel, philosophy can only become science through rigorous exposition, guided by what he calls inner necessity. "The inner necessity that knowing should be Science lies in its nature,

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and only the exposition of philosophy itself provides a satisfactory statement" (§5, 3*).

Inner necessity can only be depicted through a specific kind of thought called the concept (*der Begriff*, from *begreifen* = to comprehend, to grasp, and from *greifen* = to grasp). Miller's translation of the same term as "notion" fails to "grasp" Hegel's intention to oppose the concept that etymologically can be said to grasp that to which it refers to kinds of thought that fail to do so. Truth is found only in science, or scientific philosophy. The form of truth is conceptual because "the element of its existence is only in the concept" (§6, 4*). A conceptual approach to knowledge excludes intuitive knowledge, to which Hegel now refers polemically. Intuitive knowledge is exemplified by F. H. Jacobi and Friedrich Schleiermacher, two contemporary thinkers who stress faith over reason, whom Hegel criticizes in *Faith and Knowledge*.⁵

Hegel's commitment to a conceptual approach to knowledge takes him beyond faith, hence beyond an immediate reconciliation with the divine. It also requires the rejection of mere feeling, which is a retreat from philosophy in Hegel's sense, as well as insight (*Einsicht*), which he contrasts to edification (*Erbauung*) and which Richard Rorty champions.⁶ Hegel prefers "the cold forward-striding [fortschreitende] necessity of the affair [Sache]" (§7, 5*).

The demand that philosophy enable us to recover what has been lost leads to a further demand to abandon experience, whose interest has only been seen with great difficulty. Hegel is apparently thinking here of Plato's deprecation of the world of appearance in favor of the world of reality. In claiming to raise our eyes from this world to the divine, we are satisfied with mere feeling, parenthetically all that edification can provide. Hegel sarcastically characterizes this in saying, "By what satisfies spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss" (§8, 5*). It would be an error to consider the enthusiasm and muddiness resulting from a renunciation of science as superior to it, as if we could somehow directly receive knowledge from on high. Echoing Descartes's famous effort to distinguish waking from sleeping,⁷ he remarks, again sarcastically, that nonconceptual sleep only brings us dreams.

According to Descartes, we must break with all past views of knowledge in order to begin again. For Hegel, we need to complete the break with the past in order to bring about a different period. The great French Revolution created a new opportunity. Writing in its wake, he famously remarks, "Besides, it is not difficult to see that ours is a time of birth and of transition to a new period" (§11, 6*). At stake is a new world

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that, like a newborn child who is not yet an adult, is not yet a complete reality (*vollkommene Wirklichkeit*). Philosophy has a practical role to play with respect to this new world. "It comes on the scene for the first time in its immediacy or its Concept" (§12, 7). This passage is consistent with a well-known letter to his friend and sometime patron, Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, written the year after the *Phenomenology* appeared, in which Hegel insists that theory is even more important than practice.⁸ He now gives a similar reason in suggesting that philosophy formulates ideas that in turn realize themselves in the form of a new world. Using the Aristotelian example of the acorn and the oak, he explicitly warns against confusing the former with the latter, or theory with practice.

Science, or philosophical science, similarly requires fully concrete development to be "exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all" (§13, 7). When it is still undeveloped, science can legitimately be criticized. But when it has reached completeness of detail, or perfection of form, it is beyond criticism. In the *Differenzschrift*, in rejecting the formalism that he detects in the critical philosophy, he compares Kant's categories to "dead pigeonholes of the intellect."⁹ Here he objects to "the shapeless repetition

of one and the same formula" (§15, 8) that finally tells us nothing more than what we already know.

Hegel applies this standard to the absolute that he does not now define. In the *Diffirenzschrift*, Hegel, who was still unknown, was dependent on Schelling, his former roommate in the Tübinger Stift and his philosophical patron in Jena, with whom he sided against Fichte. Now that he has written a major study, Hegel breaks publicly with Schelling. He repeats Fichte's formula (from the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794), $A = A$,¹⁰ to satirize Schelling's failure to preserve distinctions in his version of the absolute. In a famous reference to Schelling, he observes that "to give out his absolute for the night in which, as man likes to say, all the cows are black is the naïveté of the emptiness with respect to knowledge" (§16, 9*). Formalism will disappear only when "the cognizing of absolute reality" (§16, 9*) has its own nature and conditions.

The alternative to mere formalism is system and "deduction," or rigorous exposition, as criteria of scientific philosophy. Hegel's own theory "can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself" (§17, 9-10). The exposition occupies the whole main text. Hegel evidently means to offer a system. Although he describes its outlines in the *En-*

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cyclopedia, he never says in the *Phenomenology* how "system" is to be understood. Continuing the same sentence, he insists on the cognitive importance of "grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject" (§17, 10). This reference, which is not explained here, anticipates the account of absolute knowing that ends the book.

The allusions to God as one substance (§17, 10) refer to the controversy about Spinoza, after G. H. Lessing's death, in correspondence between Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn. This correspondence, published in 1785, led to a famous "struggle over pantheism" (*Pantheismusstreit*). Eventually, Kant, J. W. Goethe, J. G. von Herder, J. C. Lavater, and others became involved.¹¹ In the *Encyclopedia*, recalling Lessing's famous remark that Spinoza was treated like a dead dog, Hegel later comments that the treatment of speculative philosophy is scarcely better.¹² His sympathy for Spinozism is apparent in his claim, redolent of pantheism, that "the living Substance is being which is in truth subject" (§18, 10).

Hegel further stresses his idea of the true as substance and as subject. The object of knowledge is, like a subject, active in that it develops within consciousness. For "the living substance is being which is in truth Subject, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself" (§18, 10). He echoes a passage in the *Diffirenzschrift* ¹³ in comparing the process through which the object changes as we seek to know it to a "circle that presupposes its end as its goal, at its beginning, and is only actual through the carrying out and its end" (§18, 10*).

In noting, through an allusion to Reinhold, that "the life of God and divine cognition" amount to nothing more than "mere edification and even insipidity," he contrasts unphilosophy with philosophy, which requires "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative" (§19, 10). Once again, he means to avoid conflating the mere form of science with science.

Now returning to his view of substance as subject, he draws the consequence in writing that "the True is the whole" (§20, 11); what we seek to know, which he calls the absolute, can only be known when it is fully developed, as a result. For it is in the result, in which its essence (*Wesen*) is effectively realized, or actual, that it has become and can be known. The result follows from a process.

Hegel anticipates an objection, following from "ignorance of the nature of mediation and of absolute cognition itself" (§21, 11), to the view

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that the absolute is a result. Mediation is nothing other than the process of self-development of the subject, or, in other words, the object's development for the cognitive subject. What we know, we know only as a result of a rational process.

This point is restated in the remark that "Reason is *purposive activity* [*das zweckmäßige Tun*]" (§22, 12). Hegel here sides with Aristotle, for whom purpose is intrinsic to development, against Kant, who holds that purpose is an interpretive tool only. Hegel now draws a parallel between an object's development of the object and our knowledge of it. The result is realization of the beginning, or initial purpose, that motivates the developmental process.

Yet Hegel rejects a standard, Aristotelian view of knowledge of the subject as that of which qualities can be predicated. For Hegel, the absolute as subject is not static but self-developing. In statements such as "God is the eternal, . . . the True is only posited immediately as Subject, but is not presented as the reflecting into itself" (§23, 12*).

Like other post-Kantian German idealists, Hegel accepts Kant's view that knowledge requires systematic science, understood as uniting different types of knowledge under a single idea.¹⁴ Like Fichte, he rejects Reinhold's neorationalist approach to system through a single principle. For Hegel, "a so-called basic proposition or principle of philosophy, if true, is also false, just because it is only a principle" (§24, 13*). This passage refers backward to his criticism of Reinhold in the *Differenzschrift*. It is later amplified in the important chapter in the *Science of Logic* entitled "With What Must the Science Begin?"¹⁵

For Hegel, we only reach the true in the form of system in "the absolute as *Spirit*," which is "the most sublime Concept and one that belongs to modern times and its religion" (§25, 14*). In indicating that this concept belongs to modern religion, he has in mind his reading of Lutheranism, which will emerge below. Spirit will be discussed in a separate chapter. We can retain from the present passage that spirit is what is most actual, or fundamental. Hegel will develop his claim, affirmed dogmatically here, that developed spirit is science. Since spirit is a form of social reason, Hegel's reference to this concept suggests against Kant that we should understand reason not as pure but as "impure." Philosophical science is rooted in, not separate from, society.

Philosophical science is intended to lead to knowledge, or "*pure* self-recognition in absolute otherness" (§26, 14), roughly the claim that the subject knows and knows that it knows. Yet we must also know how to reach knowledge, since "the individual has the right to demand that

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Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint" (§26, 14). Hegel sees the process of arriving at science as like climbing up a ladder. Unlike Wittgenstein's ladder, it is not simply discarded at the end.¹⁶ For the end cannot be separated from the process leading up to it. The *Phenomenology* expounds "this becoming of Science as such or of knowledge" (§27, 15*), commencing with sense-certainty, and continuing down the long road to absolute knowing that is not defined here. Since there is no immediate knowledge, knowledge in the full sense cannot begin "like a shot from a pistol" (§27, 16).¹⁷

Hegel now relates human beings to the process of knowledge. The individual, who participates in the knowing process, does so from both individual and universal perspectives. What was earlier central, as the current view of knowledge, afterward subsists as a mere trace (*Spur*), like Jacques Derrida's own view of the trace (*la trace*).¹⁸ We cannot separate prior from present views of knowledge. The process of education consists in making our own what was already known by our predecessors, "a past existence" now described as "the already acquired property of universal Spirit which constitutes the substance of the individual" (§28, 16). Human history records the immense efforts of human beings over a period of many centuries to know the world and themselves through the elaboration of a satisfactory view of knowledge. "The goal is Spirit's insight into what knowing is" (§29, 17).

In the course of human history, mere existence is transformed into a series of shapes. To transform experience into knowledge, we must consider the movement of shapes preserved in memory, which must be represented and with which we must become acquainted. Through representation, we arrive at what is familiar to us, but which, to become scientific knowledge, requires the more refined cognitive "activity of the *universal self*, the concern of *thinking*" (§30, 18). Representation is limited to what, since it is familiar, is not often interrogated or comprehended. For "the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognized [erkannt]" (§31, 18*).

Analysis (*Analysieren*) of an idea into its constituent elements, through the understanding (*Verstand*), as distinguished from reason, will not yield knowledge. Kant's critical philosophy features categories, or pure concepts of the understanding, that "produce," or "construct," the objects of experience by unifying the contents of sensory experience. For Hegel, on the contrary, the understanding does not unify but rather separates. He refers to "the activity of separation of the *Understanding*, the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute

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power" (§32, 18). The understanding's capacity to introduce distinctions, to separate what was whole, or the power of the negative that causes death, is a phase of the cognitive process. In a further phase, mere individuality is transformed into universality. In this way, thoughts, or pure essences, are brought together in an "organic whole" (§34, 20).

Rigorous exposition is the first part of science that deals only with immediate existence prior to reflection on it. The subject's consciousness is a relation of subject and object, "knowing and the negative objectivity [Gegenständlichkeit] to knowing" (§36, 21*). Both moments appear in a series of different shapes over time. Considered as science, cognition is "the Science of the experience which consciousness traverses" (§36, 21*).

In consciousness, the object is only the subject that stands over against and opposes itself before in turn overcoming this distinction. This is what we mean by experience. When subject and object coincide within consciousness, we have truth.

Consciousness knows and grasps only what is in its experience; for what is in this is only spiritual substance, and truly as object of the self. But Spirit becomes object because it is this movement of becoming an other to itself, i.e., becoming an object to itself, and of sublating this otherness. And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e., the abstract, whether it be of sensuous being, or only thought of as simple, alienates itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its reality and truth, also as has become property of consciousness." (§36, 21*)

The main task is to understand how the relation of subject and object within consciousness yields knowledge. The opposition between the subject and the object within consciousness is an inequality (*Ungleichheit*), or a difference between how the object appears and in fact is. This is described as "just as much the inequality of the substance with itself" (§34, 21*).

Since knowledge requires a coincidence of subject and object, the inequality must be overcome. In explicating the relation between the way the object appears and in fact is, Hegel claims that substance is subject. This inference follows since the cognitive object, or substance, is self-moving, and activity is the hallmark of subjectivity. Knowledge requires us to demonstrate how the object as it is and the object as it appears coincide within consciousness. This demonstration will bring the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to an end.

At the end of the cognitive process the subject must know its object

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as itself. This requires "*Logic or speculative philosophy*." This statement indicates that as Hegel was putting the finishing touches to the *Phenomenology*, he was already thinking of the *Science of Logic*, where he will later propose a theory of logic as pure science. It further indicates that in writing this passage, he intended the *Logic* to continue the theory of knowledge initially proposed in the *Phenomenology*. By inference, neither work is self-sufficient, and both belong to a larger theory that is fully stated in neither.¹⁹

As its full title suggests, Hegel's *Phenomenology* centers on appearance in consciousness. The difficulty is how to go from mere appearance to reality, or from what is false to what is true. Why should one not rather avoid the laborious study of false views that must be shown to be false to arrive at the true view? Hegel has already examined this problem in his denial that we can begin with absolute knowledge. Since he refuses any separation between the process leading up to an end and the end that motivates the process, he must further hold that truth and falsity are not exclusive alternatives. As he says, "truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made" (§39, 22). The view that truth can only take the form of an immediate, fixed result is dogmatic. Often, we cannot directly go to the truth, since historical truth is contingent, arbitrary, and without necessity.

For Hegel, mathematics functions for unphilosophical minds as the ideal of knowledge that philosophy only mistakenly imitates. In ancient times since Plato and in modern times since Descartes, mathematics, particularly geometry, has routinely served as the unexamined standard of rigorous knowledge. Kant, who was well versed in mathematics and in the physical sciences of his time, bases his theory of knowledge on his controversial interpretation of mathematics as synthetic a priori in character.²⁰ Whereas in philosophy mathematics usually appears as the queen of sciences, for Hegel it assumes the role of the cognitive whipping boy.

Hegel's controversial attack on mathematics (he is concerned not to celebrate its success as the model for knowledge but rather to indicate why it fails to provide knowledge at all) follows from his view that it fails to grasp the individual object. Philosophy, which, like mathematics, distinguishes between the essence and existence of its object, differs in uniting both within a twofold process that is the "genesis of the whole" (§42, 24). In mathematical

cognition, insight is external to, and alters, the true situation (*die wahre Sache*). Although mathematical propositions are doubtlessly true, they are also basically defective (*mangel-*

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haftig). For we do not "see any necessity in the construction" and the "necessity does not arise from the Concept of the theorem" but is "imposed" (§44, 25). Since mathematics merely exhibits functionality (*Zweckmäßigkeit*), it lacks scientific stature. Hence it cannot function as an epistemological model.

The defective form of mathematical cognition exhibits "poverty of purpose and defectiveness of its stuff" (§45, 25). Mathematics centers on magnitude that, Hegel claims, lacks conceptual rigor. For number reveals no necessary connection, and mathematical evidence is merely formal. Magnitude is an inessential distinction. Hegel strangely says that mathematics does not take up the relation of lines to surfaces. Temporarily forgetting about such elementary formulas as the Pythagorean theorem, he complains that mathematics cannot deal with incommensurability. In mathematical physics, he discerns a tendency to accept merely apparent proofs that leads him to object, obscurely enough, to Galileo's law of falling bodies as deriving from the conception of thing-hood.²¹

Hegel's main complaint is that, compared to philosophy, mathematics is abstract. Coming close to pantheism, he refers to philosophy as "the real, self-positing and in itself living, existence in its concept" (§47, 27*). Philosophy grasps the unchanging truth as it appears in experience. Waxing lyrical, he writes that "the True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; and because each, in that it separates itself, likewise immediately dissolves—is likewise transparent and simple repose" (§47, 27*).

In his depiction of philosophical science, Hegel briefly raises the problem of method that, since Descartes's "Discourse on Method" (1637),²² is a main thread of the modern epistemological discussion. Its exposition "belongs to . . . or rather is Logic" that studies "the structure [Bau] set forth in its pure essentiality" (§48, 28). The idea of philosophical method is old-fashioned in much the same way as mathematical method. Although useful in conversation, such an approach lacks conceptual necessity that depends on following the change of the object in consciousness. Hegel's criticism of Kant's critical philosophy for separating method from content²³ suggests that his own theory cannot have a method in any usual sense of the term.

In connection with method, Hegel devotes special attention to triadic form (*Triplizität*), which, in his theory, is associated with dialectic. This word, which he rarely uses, was later debased in the Marxist view of dialectical materialism²⁴ that has only the term in common with

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Hegel. Further, "dialectical materialism" is foreign to Marx, who never uses it. Kant introduced an abstract type of triadic form in his table of categories, divided into four groups, in each of which the third category is generated from a combination of the first two.²⁵ For Hegel, who regards Kant's work as illustrating mere formalism, triadic form, properly understood, leads to the "Concept of Science" (§50, 29*). Yet he says no more about it. Although his theory is often depicted as featuring a three-stage view of dialectic, dialectic of this kind would only be a form of formalism. Formalism conflates conceptual comprehension with attaching a predicate to a predetermined framework simply superimposed on the phenomena, "with some determination of the schema as a predicate" (§50, 29). It provides no more than a superficial analogy that falls short of conceptual comprehension, "as quickly learned as it is easy to practice" (§51, 30), but just as useless.

In contrast, science does not impose a schema on the content but rather follows its self-development through "the self-moving soul of the realized content" (§53, 31-32). Content is self-determining in a way that understanding simply fails to grasp. The reference to the "tabulary understanding [der tabularische Verstand]" as failing to grasp "the necessity and concept of the concept" (§53, 32*) (which Miller unaccountably translates as "pigeonholing process") recalls Hegel's complaint against the Kantian categories in the *Differenzschrift* as simply inadequate to know the content of experience.

In comparison, scientific cognition grasps the inner necessity of its object. In principle, it follows the self-development of the object, or content of consciousness, "its own reflection into itself" (§54, 33). Since whatever is for a cognitive subject is in consciousness and consciousness is merely a thought (*Gedanke*), then "Being is Thought [Denken]" (§54, 33).

In this way, Hegel identifies with the endeavor to show the unity of thought and being that goes back in the tradition at least to Parmenides.²⁶

He helpfully distinguishes between ordinary understanding (*Verständigkeit*) and ordinary reasoning (*Vernünftigkeit*), or between understanding and reason. Following Kant, he regards understanding, hence understandability, as providing stability, or form, and reason, hence reasonability, as the principle of conceptual movement. He again suggests that we do not cause concepts to develop, since they are self-moving. This movement is intrinsic to what only appears to be fixed, as he notes in writing that "ordinary understanding [*Verständigkeit*] is, hence, a becoming, and this becoming is ordinary reasoning [*Vernünftigkeit*]" (§55, 34*).

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Hegel now links reason, which he favors and which he has just distinguished from the understanding, to his overall theory through a brief account of logical necessity. Logical necessity, which provides a conceptual grasp of speculative philosophy, "alone is the rational element and the rhythm of the organic whole; it is as much *knowledge* of the content, as the content is the Concept and essence—or, it alone is *speculative philosophy*" (§56, 34*). He again rejects any appeal to an external formalism in favor of concepts allowing us to grasp the internal development of the conceptual object.

Scientific method, which is inseparable from content, cannot merely be superimposed on it. Scientific method follows the movement of content expounded in speculative philosophy. The study of science requires us to think conceptually, "to take on oneself the strenuous effort of the Concept" (§58, 35*). We must eschew mere representation, as well as merely abstract argument, devoid of content, in favor of scrupulously following the spontaneous movement of content, "the immanent rhythm of the Concept" (§58, 36*).

Speculative thinking is also opposed to two further kinds of argumentation: ordinary skepticism and a particular form of subject-predicate analysis. Ordinary skepticism is superficial, and external, intended merely to refute claims to know as mere vanity (*Eitelkeit*). For Hegel, who hints at the way that he integrates skepticism into the cognitive process, in which different views are tested and rejected in the course of arriving at a satisfactory conception, "the negative belongs to the content itself" (§59, 36). There is an important distinction between rejecting all possible views of the matter and in rejecting one or another specific view of it. In cognition, different specific views are examined and rejected, although the idea of truth is not rejected, in the course of arriving at a correct view. This process is described as yielding "the *determinate* negative, and with it likewise a positive content" (§59, 36*).

Hegel, who is often regarded as a speculative thinker, now links philosophical speculation to determinate negation. Speculative thinking, like determinate negation, also rejects the Aristotelian view of "a *Subject* to which the content is related as Accident and Predicate" (§60, 36-37). This influential view goes all the way back to Aristotle's idea of the subject as primary being (*ousia*) of which things are predicated.²⁷ It is influential much later, for instance, at the beginning of modern philosophy, in the Cartesian distinction between the cognitive subject and object, or between thinking substance and extended substance. This Cartesian view was most closely represented, when Hegel was writing, by Fichte.

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In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel criticizes Fichte for attempting to begin the cognitive process from the standpoint of the self.²⁸ In the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte argues that the subject is active, or simply activity.²⁹ Hegel (who appears to misunderstand Fichte) objects here that the cognitive subject is not passive but active, since "the self-moving Concept . . . takes its determinations back into itself" (§60, 37*). The subject "perishes" through the self-development of the concept, and "the solid ground which argumentation has in the passive Subject is therefore shaken" (§60, 37).

Referring to his own theory, Hegel suggests that to substitute a view of substance for an analysis of knowledge based on the (Cartesian) relation of subject to accident, or predicate, simply ruins representational thinking. The latter, which depends on this dualism, suffers, in parodying Fichte's term "thrust" (*Anstoss*), a "counterthrust" (*Gegenstoss*). In place of the subjective-predicate approach to knowledge, Hegel stresses the active subject, or "the knowing 'I' itself, the linking of the Predicates with the Subject holding them" (§60, 37*).

Hegel spells out his alternative to a subject-predicate analysis of knowledge in a reference to the speculative proposition. He straightforwardly claims, without further

explanation, that the distinction in question is "destroyed" through the speculative proposition. Drawing the consequences of the "counterthrust" directed against a theory of cognition from the perspective of the self, he writes that

the nature of the judgment or proposition, which involves the distinction of Subject and Predicate in general, is destroyed [zerstört] by the speculative proposition, and the proposition of identity which the former becomes contains the counterthrust against that subject-predicate relationship. (§61, 38*)

The distinction between the two epistemological poles is grounded in a deeper, underlying unity, or identity. Anselm's ontological proof for the existence of God can be paraphrased as the idea that it is better for God, who by definition has all possible positive properties, also to have existence, hence to exist. Hegel, who presumably follows Anselm, suggests that in the proposition 'God is being', subject and predicate cannot be isolated from one another. Failure to note that philosophy is based on the speculative proposition makes it so difficult to understand. Yet since there are not many speculative philosophers—Hegel notoriously accords the name "philosopher" only to Fichte and Schelling among his contemporaries—this seems mainly an excuse for the difficulty in grasping his own writings.

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The speculative proposition is merely another form of the basic claim for a cognitive grasp of objectivity. How can Hegel justify his claim? His interesting response carries further his view of philosophical science as relying on "the dialectical movement" of the proposition itself (§66, 40). Philosophy need not rely on giving reasons, or on stating conditions, but merely on restricting the exposition to conceptual comprehension. For "the exposition should remain true to the nature of speculation, preserve the dialectical form and admit nothing except in so far as it is comprehended, and is the Concept" (§66, 41).

Philosophy is hindered by nonratiocinative approaches consisting in mere assertion. It is further hindered by the widespread but mistaken conviction that although not everyone can be a shoemaker, everyone can be a philosopher, leading to a reliance on "direct revelation of the divine and healthy common sense" (§68, 42*). Then there is the romantic view of genius that substitutes intuition, or poetic thought, for the concept. What can be called natural philosophizing offers no more than trivial truths regarded as ultimate, as illustrated in catechisms or popular sayings. In a withering comment, Hegel remarks that someone who appeals to common feeling "tramples underfoot the roots of humanity" (§69, 43). He adds that "the anti-human, the merely animal, consists in staying within the sphere of feeling, and being able to communicate only at that level" (§69, 43).

Paraphrasing Euclid's view that there is no royal road to geometry, Hegel says that there is also none to science. Common sense is fine in ordinary circumstances, but as concerns knowledge there is no substitute for the concept.

True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labor of the Concept. Only the Concept can produce the universality of knowledge which is neither common vagueness nor the inadequacy of ordinary common sense, but a fully developed, perfected cognition. (§70, 43*)

Toward the end of his preface, Hegel considers obstacles to the acceptance of his theory and his own role in the search for philosophical truth. Since his view of the "self-movement of the Concept" (§71, 44*) is opposed to other current views of truth, he realistically says it is not likely to persuade. Implicitly comparing himself and his work to the greatest examples in ancient times, he takes comfort in the fact that great thinkers and their works are mainly misunderstood. His allusions here to the speculative depth of Aristotle and to Plato's *Parmenides* as the greatest example of ancient dialectic indicate his understanding of the relation of his position to the ancient tradition.

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At the close of his great preface, he again follows Kant's insistence on scientific philosophy. The excellence (*das Vortreffliche*) of contemporary philosophy, implicitly including his own, lies in the scientificity (*Wissenschaftlichkeit*) through which it is influential. He at least hopes that the present effort to vindicate a philosophical theory based on concepts "will know how to win acceptance through the inner truth of the subject-matter" (§71, 44*). Yet he realistically links the acceptance of a given theory, including his own, to the historical moment in which it appears. The acceptance of his position will only occur when the public is ready for it, since "it is the nature of truth to get through if its time has come, and it appears only when it has come, and therefore never too early, nor finds a public not ripe to receive it" (§71, 44*). When this occurs, the conviction of a single author will be universally held. Looking ahead to the reaction of colleagues, he distinguishes them from the public for which they

vainly claim to speak. For there is a difference between the more immediate reaction and that occurring only later.

The preface closes with another rare, personal remark. Earlier, in an optimistic glance at his historical moment, Hegel indicated that now is a propitious time for change. Looking once more at the present, he says that it is also a propitious time for philosophy. For "when the universality of Spirit is so strengthened [erstarkt]" (§72, 45*), the individual's own role, by implication his own role, must be very small indeed. As Hegel did throughout his career, he now recommends that the individual look away from himself to do what he can, conscious of how little he may demand for himself.

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Chapter 2

"Introduction"

The relatively short introduction—less than eleven closely reasoned pages in a recent translation, and arguably one of the most important texts in Hegel's corpus—has often been discussed,¹ Here he begins to work out a theory of scientific cognition, or philosophical science, an intention he has announced in the preface.

Hegel here argues, using Kant's critical philosophy as an illustration, that we do not and cannot know an independent external object, since we know only what appears in consciousness. He restates the familiar dualistic relation between a subject and an independent object as a dualism occurring within consciousness between our view of the object and the object as experienced. Knowledge is the end result of a process in which both our view of the object and the object of the view are altered through comparison of one with the other, and which terminates when they coincide.

Hegel is characterized by deep knowledge of the preceding philosophical tradition. He typically arrives at his own approach through criticism of other views, especially the critical philosophy. Kant elucidates the most general possibility of knowledge as distinguished from the process of acquiring knowledge. He distinguishes between the cognitive input received through the sensory manifold and the understanding, or faculty of knowledge through which the input is "worked up" to yield the objects of experience and knowledge. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the input, or medium through which the subject acquires information, is analyzed in the "Transcendental Aesthetic"; and the faculty of knowledge, or cognitive instrument, is discussed in the "Tran-

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scendental Analytic." Hegel finds the Kantian approach to clarifying the conditions of knowledge prior to knowledge natural, but not scientific. He immediately rejects any approach to knowledge through either a medium or an instrument when, in the first sentence of the introduction, he writes,

It is a natural presupposition [Vorstellung] that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its subject-matter [die Sache selbst], viz. the cognition [Erkennen] of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument [Werkzeug] to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. (§73, 4-6*)²

Kant intends his critical philosophy to be a third way between dogmatism and skepticism. He claims that prior theories are dogmatic (but not critical) in that they merely assert, but are typically unable to prove, their claims to knowledge. "Critical" roughly means "able to demonstrate its claims." For Hegel, since Kant is also not able to demonstrate his claim, the critical philosophy is dogmatic and ends in skepticism. Yet he follows Kant in making central to his own theory the idea of a theory of knowledge able to account for its own conditions. The difference is that for Kant the conditions must be ascertained prior to and apart from the process of knowledge, while for Hegel they can only be ascertained from within that process. For Kant is concerned with the conditions whatsoever whereas Hegel is concerned with the real conditions, of human knowledge.

Kant uses the Latin *cognitio* and the German *Erkenntnis* to designate knowledge. Hegel's *Erkennen*, which means "perception, seeing, differentiating, or noticing how something or someone is," is a general term that embraces specific types of knowledge. It is based on *kennen*, roughly "knowledge by acquaintance," and is closely related to *anerkennen*, roughly "recognition," as well as *Erkenntnistheorie* or *Erkenntnislehre*, closely synonymous terms best translated as "theory of knowledge." The main theme of Hegel's book can be described as an exposition of epistemology running from cognition to absolute knowing.

To show that the natural model of knowledge, illustrated in the critical philosophy, is self-stultifying, Hegel examines views of cognition as an instrument (Kant's understanding) for knowing an independent object, what he calls "absolute being," and as a passive medium (Kant's sensory manifold). Kant's critical philosophy is based on a distinction

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between the appearance (*Erscheinung*), or the object which is given in experience, and the thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*), or the object that is not and cannot be given in experience but that can be thought.

It is reasonable to ask that knowledge overcome the distinction between appearance and reality in showing us the object as it is. Kant attempts to do this through his views of cognition either as an instrument or as a passive medium. Since what we perceive is altered by the way it is perceived, neither view overcomes the distinction between the way the object is in itself, as a mere object of thought, and as it appears within experience.

For, if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on an object [*Sache*] certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather reshapes and alters it. If, on the other hand, cognition is not an instrument of our activity but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. (§73, 46*)

It might seem that if we knew how cognition worked, we could somehow subtract whatever it added in order to grasp the object as it is in itself. In optics, Snell's law says that after subtracting for the medium through which the rays of light pass, the angle of incidence and the angle of refraction are the same. The trick is to determine the deviation introduced by the medium through which light passes. Hegel now entertains the idea of a conceptual Snell's law that would allow us to determine the object as it is as distinguished from the way it appears. This would enable us to return to where we were, but it would not tell us anything about the object as it is in itself. Although we can certainly think about the latter, our only access to it is through its appearance in conscious experience.

If the possibilities suggested by Kant are unavailing, since we are unable to show that we can trust our cognitive capacities, the result is mistrust, in effect skepticism. Yet we should mistrust this mistrust. Skeptical mistrust presupposes that we know that we do not know. For "it takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an instrument and as a medium, and assumes that there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition" (§74, 47).

After this brief examination of the possible moves following from Kant's critical philosophy, Hegel addresses the general possibility of knowledge. He refers directly to the critical philosophy in writing that

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this conclusion stems from the fact that the Absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is absolute. One may set this aside on the grounds that there is a type of cognition which, though it does not cognize the Absolute as Science aims to, is still true, and that cognition in general, though it be incapable of grasping the Absolute, is still capable of grasping other kinds of truth. (§75, 47-48)

What we mean by true is nothing more than the object of thought. Yet, in virtue of the basic distinction between appearance and independent reality, or essence, the latter cannot be grasped by a theory that is limited to appearance. The critical philosophy yields true knowledge of appearance only, but not knowledge of the absolute that alone is truth.

It is problematic to rely on either the instrument or the medium of cognition, namely, on the two possibilities featured in Kant's critical philosophy. Both concern the mere appearance of science in a way that impedes the difficult labor of science. In endeavoring to determine the conditions of knowledge in isolation from the process of knowledge, Kant desires to reach science before and as a necessary condition of beginning the scientific process. Yet we cannot arrive at science before setting out on the road to knowledge since science itself progressively develops as we travel down that road. "But Science [*Wissenschaft*], just because it comes on the scene, is itself an appearance [*Erscheinung*]: in coming on the scene it is not yet Science in its developed and unfolded truth" (§76, 48). Since we cannot begin with an already

completed science, we must begin, as Dante would say, in the midst of things, in media res, on the road to science and knowledge.

Hegel is concerned "with an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance" (§76, 49). This requires a description of the way that human beings come to know, which he calls natural consciousness. Study of how knowledge appears "can be regarded as the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge" (§77, 4-9).

There is an obvious distinction to be made between ordinary, or natural, consciousness and scientific consciousness. Ordinary consciousness offers no more than the concept (*Begriff*) of knowledge, which is not to be confused with knowledge. Ordinary consciousness that takes itself to be knowledge lands in skepticism that, it follows, is also natural. Hegel describes ordinary consciousness as "the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair" (§78, 49).

Hegel, who was specifically concerned with skepticism during his period in Jena,³ distinguishes now between skepticism about particular forms of consciousness and skepticism about consciousness in general

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as a source of knowledge. The latter cannot be defeated within natural, or uncritical, consciousness that, as skepticism properly shows, is inadequate to yield knowledge. It can only be defeated within another, self-critical, form of consciousness that is concerned to examine its claims to know. We do not begin with knowledge that we reach only as a re-suit of passing through a series of stages. "The series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education [Bildung]* of consciousness itself to Science" (§78, 50*). The history of natural science can illustrate the process through which human beings have long been educating themselves to take a scientific view of themselves and the surrounding world. If the standard is scientific knowledge, it is entirely appropriate to be skeptical about any natural, or unexamined, claims to know.

Examination and rejection of intermediate results reached at intermediate stages of the knowing process drive it onward toward the goal of an adequate model of knowledge. Rejection of the result attained at any given stage in the knowing process leads, not to the rejection of the whole series, but merely to the rejection of a particular view that is then replaced by another, successor view. Like the scientific tradition itself, the series of shapes of knowledge is inherently self-perpetuating. Later views correct, build on, and surpass those they replace, as Fichte builds on Kant, Schelling builds on Fichte, and Hegel builds on Kant, Fichte, and Schelling.

In principle, the series of different views of knowledge is self-limiting, providing closure. There is a distinction between rejecting a particular result in the cognitive process, through "determinate negation" (§79, 51) that gives rise to a new form, a new theory that must in turn be scrutinized, and the idea that we must therefore reject the cognitive process as a whole. Our goal is the end point of the process, "there, where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where it finds itself, and the concept [*Begriff*] corresponds to the object [*Gegenstand*] and the object to the concept" (§80, 51*). At this point, when the view of the object corresponds to the object of the view as given in experience, we will no longer need to examine further views.

How do we know when this occurs? How do we know that we know? It is often suggested that we require a criterion for knowledge. The problem of a criterion,⁴ necessary to draw a distinction between true and false appearances, has a lengthy history.⁵ Descartes invokes clarity and distinctness as twin criteria to distinguish true from false ideas, where "true" means that the idea accurately represents independent ex-

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ternal reality. Hegel, who is not interested in representing an independent external reality that does not appear in consciousness and cannot be known, retains the conception of a criterion. He concedes that the knowing process apparently requires a criterion, or accepted standard, in terms of which such an examination can take place. "If this exposition is viewed as an attitude of *Science to appearing* knowledge, and as an investigation and *examination of the reality of cognition*, it seems not able to take place without any presupposition [*Voraussetzung*] that can serve as its underlying *criterion [Maßstab]*" (§81, 52*).

A criterion would presumably pick out legitimate claims to know from those that only appear to be legitimate. Without a criterion, it seems we cannot even examine candidates for

knowledge. Since at the beginning of the process of knowledge there is as yet no criterion, there is a contradiction (*Widerspruch*): the apparent need for one although none is at hand. Hegel resolves this difficulty through a general, descriptive remark about the knowing process (§82) that he then interprets (§§83 and 84) to dispel the difficulty. In an important passage, deep into the discussion, using dualistic terminology (being-in-itself, being-for-itself) that is a thinly disguised renaming of Kant's distinction between appearance and reality, he explains his view of a phenomenological science of experience.

To grasp Hegel's view, it is useful to say a bit more about Kant. Kant, who makes the object of experience dependent on the cognitive subject, reduces the object to a mere appearance with an unfathomable link to an uncognizable independent reality. According to Kant, either the mind corresponds to the object, in which case the subject knows the object as it is, or it corresponds to the mind. He ingeniously suggests that for knowledge to be possible, the object of experience must correspond to, hence be "produced" by, the subject.⁶ The object of the mind, or thing-in-itself, which designates independent reality, can without contradiction be thought of as a cause of which the appearance, what is given in experience, can without contradiction be thought of as an effect.⁷

Kant illustrates the effort, widespread in modern philosophy, to know an independent external object through an analysis of the relation between the knowing subject and its object. Yet there is no way to grasp the relation of whatever appears within consciousness to an independent external reality. Hegel's solution is to replace this relation through a very different relation between a subject and an object that falls entirely within consciousness. Knowledge is not a process of bringing our

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view of the object into correspondence with an independent external object, but rather a process of bringing our view of the object within consciousness into correspondence with the object of that view within consciousness.

Hegel's approach rests on the subject's ability to distinguish between its view of the object, roughly what the subject thinks the object is, or its "theory" about it, and what is given in conscious experience. This distinction presupposes a conception of self-consciousness.

With respect to self-consciousness, Hegel follows Fichte. Kant mentions but does not develop the idea of self-consciousness in his account of the subject as the original synthetic unity of apperception in §16 of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This idea is elaborated by Fichte, who argues that we can only comprehend consciousness through self-consciousness. Hegel's analysis relies on the reflexive capacity for self-consciousness of any conscious human subject.

Among recent thinkers, Sartre has best understood this point in his distinction between nonpositional and reflective consciousness in which there is always an immediate, noncognitive relation of the self to itself,⁸ a relation that is the basis of his view of freedom.⁹ Consciousness is always consciousness of something. Whenever we are conscious of something, we are at least potentially self-aware, or conscious of our consciousness of that something.

Hegel, who has already argued that knowledge is a process of self-education within consciousness, has yet to show how this process takes place. He does so now through a distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness that enables him to provide a description of knowing and truth as occurring, as noted, within consciousness. In a crucial passage referring to the problematic status of the criterion, he writes, "Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and to which it at the same time relates itself, or, as it is expressed, it is something for consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this relating, or of the being of something for a consciousness, is knowing. But we distinguish this being-for-another [Sein für ein anderes] from being-itself [Ansichsein]; whatever is related to knowing is also distinguished from it, and posited [gesetzt] as being [seiend] also outside of this relationship; this side of this in-itself is called truth. (§82, 52-53*)"

In this brief, enigmatic statement, we have the main elements of Hegel's phenomenological approach to knowledge. The cognitive subject is aware of, but also distinguishes itself from, an object. By "object"

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is meant what is given to consciousness. "Knowing" is not a relation of a cognitive subject to an object outside it, but rather a relation of the same subject to an object within consciousness. There is a distinction between the object as it appears in consciousness and

the object as it can be supposed to be outside of consciousness, in independence of our awareness of it. Hegel calls the former knowing and the latter truth.

Any object, say, a table, is present both within consciousness, as a table for us, and outside consciousness, or in-itself. When we experience, say, a table within consciousness, we understand our perception to refer to a table beyond consciousness, in the same way phenomenologists such as Brentano and Husserl use the concept of intentionality as the property of Consciousness to be directed toward something. In the process of knowing, the distinction between what appears and what is, is overcome. At the limit, when we fully know, knowing becomes truth.

We need to rely on a criterion to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable views, although no criterion is at hand. Hegel displaces the focus from knowledge of an independent object to knowledge of what appears within consciousness. Knowledge claims are not intended to pick out something essential about anything other than what is for us, or given in experience. Since what is for us is only within consciousness, we do not need an external criterion or standard. Yet we do need a criterion, since we need to know if we know. For Hegel, any epistemological criterion must be internal to, hence self-generated within, consciousness.

This line of reasoning yields two results. First, the criterion for knowledge cannot be derived from another source, external to knowledge. A rigorous approach to knowledge cannot admit any presuppositions, such as a criterion that we simply presuppose as the standard of knowledge. This is consistent with the traditional view of philosophy as presuppositionless that Hegel later explicitly adopts,¹⁰ Second, since we cannot come to the examination of the object already in possession of a criterion that we simply apply, the needed epistemological criterion must emerge from the cognitive process itself.

Claims to know are adjudicated through simple comparison between the concept of the object and the object of the concept within consciousness. "Consciousness provides its own criterion to itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction just made falls within it" (§84, 53*). Talk about truth does not concern an independent object but what, from a perspective within consciousness, it appears to be. "Thus in what consciousness

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affirms from within itself as *being-in-itself* or the *True* we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up by which to measure what it knows" (§84, 53).

What is our role in the production of that criterion? According to Hegel, we do not have to test the relation of the concept to the object within consciousness, since it is enough merely to look on. Consciousness, which includes both an awareness of the concept of the object and the object of the concept, consists in comparing them. "For consciousness is, on the one hand, consciousness of the object, and on the other, consciousness of itself. . . . Since both are *for the same consciousness*, it [i.e., consciousness] is itself their comparison" (§85, 54*). In essence, the distinction between the way that object is in-itself and the way it appears is built into the very being of consciousness. "But in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all the distinction between the in-itself and knowledge, or being of the object *for* consciousness, is already present" (§85, 54*).

Now there are only two possible outcomes of the examination. Either the "theory" provisionally adopted is sustained when it is tested in experience, since our expectations are sustained, and the object as we expect it and as it is within consciousness coincide; or our "theory" of the object is refuted, since there is a difference between the object as we expect it to be and as it is within consciousness. In the first instance, the process has reached its end, or epistemological closure, since knowledge and truth coincide. In the second instance, they fail to coincide since the theory fails to describe the object as experienced, hence fails the test of experience. In the latter case, the criterion, or theory, must be altered to fit what is revealed in experience.

The novel aspect in Hegel's theory is not his insistence that if knowledge is based on experience, and if our view fails to correspond to what we observe, then we need to alter our theory to fit our observations. Many writers, including all empiricists, insist on the importance of respecting the verdict of experience. In this sense, Hegel is an empiricist. The novel aspect is that he further insists that when we alter the theory, adjusting it to "fit" what is observed in experience, then the object of that theory is also altered.

If the comparison shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another, it seems that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object. But in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for

it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object; as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge. (§85, 54*)

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This remark calls for two comments. First, well before Max Weber or recent philosophers of science such as Thomas Kuhn¹¹ and Ludwik Fleck,¹² among many others, Hegel denies that there is anything like a "neutral" fact or a pure given. If an object of cognition is one only for a particular theory, what counts as an object depends on the particular theory, or conceptual framework. Conversely, the choice of a theory is not free but dependent on its object. In short, theories and their objects stand in a reciprocal relation. Hegel does not now say, as he later says, that the perspective in terms of which we seek knowledge is dependent on the historical moment.¹³ That is a further move that he is not ready to make at this point but that follows from the very idea that our theories are not independent of experience but rather dependent on it.

Second, in insisting that claims for knowledge depend on a conceptual scheme, Hegel refutes in advance recent claims that knowledge is unrelated to conceptual schemes, such as perspectives, categorial frameworks, or points of view.¹⁴ We can never attain a "neutral" standpoint. The latest theory merely reflects the latest standpoint on theory. There are only theories from one or another perspective; there is no theory that is without perspective. By implication, perspective is not eliminated in even the "hardest" types of science, such as quantum theory that features alternative interpretations of quantum mechanics,¹⁵ or even in mathematics.¹⁶

Hegel, who has so far treated "experience" as an undefined, primitive term, devotes most of the remainder of the introduction to saying what he means by it. It is depicted as a process of interaction between subject and object within consciousness that, at the limit, yields truth. *"Inasmuch as the new true object [der neue wahre Gegenstand] issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself, both on its knowledge and on its object, is precisely what is called experience [Erfahrung]"* (§86, 55 *).

Hegel's epistemological optimism derives from the way in which within the knowing process our theory of the object and the object of the theory tend to converge as we successively test, reformulate, and retest our successive views of an object as progressively revealed in experience. Hegel calls this process dialectical. He regards it as steadily narrowing the gap between expectation and result by the mutual "influence" of the experienced object on the view about it and the view about it on the experienced object that is "picked out" by the theory.

We can note in passing that this is not the doctrine of epistemological progressivism, with which it is sometimes conflated. According to

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progressivism, over time our views of reality correspond ever more closely to it. For C. S. Peirce, our views of reality will become indefinitely close to it in the long run.¹⁷ Yet nothing actually shows this to be the case. No argument could actually substantiate this claim, since there is no way to compare our view with so-called independent reality. Peirce is committed to knowing the way reality is in independence of our consciousness, whereas Hegel is committed only to knowing the way it is within consciousness.

For Hegel, the conscious subject is concerned with two kinds of objects: the independent object (the in-itself) and its appearance (the for-us). When we know, a previously unknown object, a mere in-itself, becomes an object for-us. Employing essentialist language, Hegel calls the object that we know the True: "The being-for-consciousness [das Für-es-sein] of this in-itself, the True [das Wahre], is rather the essence, or its object" (§86, 55*). In other words, knowledge is a process in which what is initially unknown and independent of us, what we take to be reality, becomes known within consciousness, or again a process in which the object in-itself becomes an object for-us.

Hegel remarks that his view of experience is unusual. His view describes a transition from the first object and our view of it to a second object and our view of it. This account implies that the first object simply becomes the second object. Yet in practice, we become aware of the untruth of our concept of the original object, or our theory about it, by encountering another object. The new way of looking at the object, the new theory that replaces the earlier one, requires *"a reversal [Umkehrung] of consciousness itself"* (§87, 55).

The precise details of this process remain unclear in Hegel's account of it. The process apparently exhibits the same kind of spontaneity that, for Kant, characterizes the mind's

capacity to produce representations. For Hegel as for Kant, we do not know exactly, stage by stage, how it is that we come to know, but only that we do. We do not know whether we ourselves bring about the change to a new view or whether it is brought about in some other way. The important point, which Hegel now stresses, is that the change is not from a claim to truth to a claim that there is no truth. It is rather a change from one theory to another theory that builds on its predecessor, as "a result that contains what was true in the preceding knowledge" (§87, 56). The choice of the new view that comes on the scene is constrained in every case by its relation to the earlier view. For Hegel, necessity guides the spontaneous development of knowledge within consciousness.

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It is only this necessity [Notwendigkeit] itself, or the origination [Entstehung] of the new object, that for consciousness, without knowing how this happens for it, which proceeds for us, as it were, behind the back [hinter seinem Rücken]. Thus in the movement of consciousness there occurs a movement of being-in-itself or being-for-us which is not present to the consciousness, which is comprehended in the experience itself. (§87, 56*)

Several points are important here. First, it is clear that Hegel views experience, not as a single occasion, such as an isolated observation at a particular instant, but as a process extending over time. Second, he defuses the menace of skepticism by bringing it within the cognitive process, as a "moment" driving the cognitive process forward to ever more adequate views of knowledge. Third, he emphasizes that the transition from one object to another within consciousness is inexplicable. Although he is usually careful not to repeat himself, he hammers away at this idea no less than three times within the same paragraph. This mysterious claim perhaps amounts to nothing more than the observation, nowadays almost a platitude in philosophy of science, that there is no particular explanation as to how discoveries are made, no algorithm to be uncovered.¹⁸ For a scientific discovery is nothing other than a theory that is limited by, and in turn delimits, its possible objects, precisely the idea that Hegel has in mind.

The description of experience as a knowing process leading to truth raises the question of the status of the process. Is the road to scientific truth itself science? Does science begin beyond the process leading up to it? Hegel's lapidary answer reads: "Through its necessity, the way to Science is itself already *Science*, and hence, in virtue of its content, the Science of the *experience of consciousness*" (§88, 56*). This laconic response tells us that necessity distinguishes science from other claims to know. Yet we do not know how to understand necessity. Is it anything more than the rigor of the scientific process itself?

Science begins from natural, or unclarified, hence unscientific, assumptions. Fichte distinguishes between the attitudes of life and those of science, or ordinary life and reflection on it. Hegel views science as taking up the conceptual slack left by the untutored, but natural, assumptions we all tend to make. There is a difference between the attitude in which we take things for granted and the very different, scientific attitude in which everything is submitted to careful examination. Yet there is a continuity between what leads up to science and science itself. Both are characterized by the conceptual rigor, intrinsic to the knowing process, that distinguishes them from more ordinary claims

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to know. In his reference to this entire process as the Science of the *experience of consciousness*, as well as in his underlining of the last three words, Hegel stresses the original title of his book. This treatise is meant to show that under the proper conditions conscious experience can be scientific.

The final point, raised only in the final paragraph of the introduction, concerns the type of knowledge that follows from the new phenomenological science. Hegel has previously distinguished between true and false appearance, and described the goal of the progression within consciousness toward truth as the point at which the object in-itself and for-us (what we theorize about and what we in fact experience) coincide. When this occurs, the object appears as it is within consciousness. For there is no longer any difference between the theory of the object and the object of the theory. Successive interactions between the subject that formulates different theories about the object and the object as revealed in consciousness serve to strip away from the latter anything that is not present to consciousness. We aim throughout "at a point where appearance becomes identical with essence, where it rids itself of false appearance [Schein] . . . so that its exposition will coincide with the authentic Science of Spirit" (§89, 56-57*).

The full meaning of "spirit" only emerges much later in the book. Yet even at this early stage, we see that the Science of the experience of consciousness and the Science of Spirit are one and the same. For the experience of consciousness is part of what is meant by "Spirit." At present, it is sufficient to note once again that the path of science is a series of shapes in which the object and our views of it are reciprocally transformed on the way to truth, whose moments are "*forms of consciousness [Gestalten des Bewußtseins]*" (§89, 56*).

Hegel's understanding of the cognitive process as an interaction between the subject and the object of knowledge within consciousness has been repeatedly emphasized. For Hegel, when we have grasped this point, we have reached absolute knowing. He addresses this often-mis-understood idea in some detail in the last chapter. It will be sufficient at present to emphasize that absolute knowing has nothing whatsoever to do with supposedly indefeasible perceptual observations, of interest to Descartes and recent English philosophers, such as adverbial claims (e.g., the wall appears to me yellowly). It rather designates an additional, or metalevel, in which the discussion, which considers the relation of subject and object within consciousness, further considers the subject's full self-awareness.

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This reflexive level, typical of Hegel's theory, separates it from Kant's. Kant never asks about the relation of the thinker to the theory. He never asks how a person could possibly reach the type of knowledge specified in the critical philosophy. In fact, there is no need to inquire about the relation of the cognitive subject to the theory since, from his antipsychologistic perspective, an analysis of the conditions of knowledge must be independent of any and all anthropological considerations.

Hegel, on the contrary, ties his claims to knowledge to claims about human beings in whose consciousness knowledge appears. When this occurs, when the theory of knowledge considers not only our grasp of the object but also considers itself, when the knower surpasses consciousness to attain self-consciousness, in a certain sense the problem of knowledge has been thought through to the end. With this in mind, in the final sentence of his introduction, Hegel writes, "And finally, when consciousness itself grasps this its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute knowing [absolutes Wissen] itself" (§89, 57*).

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Chapter 3

"Consciousness" Sense-Certainty, Perception, Force and Understanding

In the preface, Hegel indicates his interest in working out a scientific theory of cognition. In the introduction, he argues in favor of a phenomenological science of the experience of consciousness, which he describes as a process occurring within consciousness.

In the account of consciousness in the first chapter, Hegel provides the initial installment of a series of connected arguments ultimately leading to what he calls absolute knowing. With Kant's critical philosophy in mind, he analyzes the cognitive process on three successive levels. Sense-certainty, the most immediate form of experience, corresponds to Kant's view of the sensory manifold, or experiential given; perception corresponds to his view of objects of experience and knowledge; and force and understanding corresponds to his and Isaac Newton's theories about the relation of the objects of experience to their properties.

The opening arguments of the book have been extensively analyzed.¹ This part of the book is not only closely argued but also stylistically similar to contemporary discussion, hence relatively more "accessible" than later parts of the exposition. The main exception is the account of the inverted world in the section "Force and Understanding," unusually difficult even by Hegelian standards.

In beginning with consciousness, Hegel begins with something that is presupposed in theories of knowledge of all kinds. Hegel's analysis of consciousness is doubly distinctive.

First, he shows that it is not the unitary phenomenon it appears to be. Levels of consciousness need to

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be distinguished and their relations need to be understood. Second, he argues that a satisfactory account of knowledge needs to go beyond consciousness to self-consciousness. For an account of knowledge based on consciousness is inherently incomplete.

Kant maintains that knowledge depends on the unity of the object, or what is to be known.² Following Kant on this point, Hegel successively examines different levels of consciousness as models of epistemological unity that, on scrutiny, can be shown to fail. This kind of distinction, which was highly original at the time, may now appear to be merely routine. In our century, when psychoanalysis is widely familiar, we are used to Freudian and other distinctions among unconscious, preconscious, and conscious types of awareness that had not yet been drawn in Hegel's day. His frequent claim that later theories build on earlier ones is nicely illustrated in the way that his triadic analysis of consciousness later recurs on different levels throughout the book.³

As the chapter title suggests, Hegel's analysis rests on a distinction among three levels of consciousness, each of which can be seen to correspond to a stage of the critical philosophy. In "Sense-Certainty," the first level, he considers the claim for direct, immediate knowledge in which the mind passively receives information about the external world. This corresponds, in the critical philosophy, to the contents of the sensory manifold that are brought together, or synthesized, by the subject as a necessary, but still insufficient, condition of knowledge. Perception, the next stage, is a form of awareness of the object considered as a thing with properties given in experience. In the critical philosophy, it corresponds to the experience of objects that occurs only after the experiential given—in Kant's terms, the contents of the sensory manifold—is brought under the categories to produce a perceptual object. In "Force and Understanding," the third stage, the subject theorizes about the unity of the single object and its multiple properties. This stage corresponds, in the critical philosophy, to Kant's analysis of the conditions of the possibility of objects of knowledge and experience as well as to the Newtonian theory of natural science, respectively the leading philosophical and scientific theories of the day.

Sense-Certainty: Or the 'This' and 'Meaning'

Hegel here describes the most immediate form of experience. Like Kant, he rejects the view that knowledge is limited to im-

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mediate experience. He shows that since language is universal, it cannot name particulars. He argues that knowledge cannot be immediate but can only be mediate.

It is helpful, to understand Hegel's view, to say something about the doctrine of empiricism and the problem of universals. Empiricism, or the general doctrine that experience is the source of all knowledge, can be formulated in different ways. Sense-certainty concerns the most immediate form of knowledge, what, as supposedly directly given, traditionally enjoys the favor of English empiricists such as Francis Bacon and John Locke. According to Locke, our ideas are uniformly due either to sensation or to reflection. Complex ideas, due to reflection, are based on simple ideas directly derived from sensation. It is beyond our power to create any new ideas, or so-called simple ideas.⁴

Kant and Hegel reject the view of immediate knowledge drawn from experience in favor of other forms of empiricism. Kant, who favors a form of empiricism, since he maintains that knowledge begins with experience, holds that it does not necessarily arise out of experience.⁵ He rejects immediate knowledge in rejecting intellectual intuition.⁶ Hegel also holds that knowledge begins with, but does not necessarily arise out of, experience. Following Kant, Hegel also rejects immediate knowledge.

In his account of consciousness, Hegel takes a position in passing on the venerable problem of universals that goes back in the tradition to Plato's theory of ideas. The three main approaches to this problem are realism, nominalism, and conceptualism. Realism is the view that universals are nonmental or mind-independent. For nominalism, there are no universals but only particulars. According to conceptualism, universals are merely mental or mind-dependent. Hegel, who holds that language refers to universals only, since we can only point

to, but not name, particulars, appears to favor a form of conceptualism, similar to Locke's view.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant credits Locke with grasping how to make the transition from particular perceptions to universal concepts—in short, to universals.⁷ Although Locke is mentioned only once by name in the *Encyclopedia*,⁸ Hegel discusses him in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,⁹ where he develops Kant's point in some detail. Here he remarks that for Locke our general ideas rest on experience. He explicitly endorses the view that the operation of consciousness draws out universals from the concrete objects of sensation, or sensory experience, while denying that universals, or universal determinations, are true in and for themselves.¹⁰ This is the general

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argument that he develops in his analysis of sensation in the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel's exposition of sense-certainty presupposes the modern distinction between sense-certainty (*sinnliche Gewissheit*) and perception (*Wahrnehmung*). In Greek thought, perception and sensation are discussed through the single word *aisthesis*, which refers indistinguishably to perception and to sensation. Kant draws the modern distinction in postulating an unperceived and unperceivable level of sensation to explain perception.

If the first and most immediate form of conscious experience were a source of reliable knowledge, there would be no reason to seek knowledge on higher levels of consciousness. In response, Hegel makes two points. First, there are levels of knowledge, of which sense-certainty represents only the initial and poorest form. Second, there is strictly speaking no immediate knowledge in the form of sense-certainty at all. For all knowledge, of whatever form, is only given mediately and never immediately.

Hegel endorses the generally Lockean view that universals emerge from immediate sensation that he now attributes to the nature of language. He begins by uncovering a basic difference, present in the title of this section, between the object, or 'this' (*dieses*), the demonstrative pronoun that refers to what is simply present to consciousness, and what we have in mind in referring through demonstrative pronouns, or what we mean (*meinen*). In calling attention to this disparity, in effect Hegel insists that, as concerns sense-certainty, we cannot say what we mean or mean what we say. The reason is that saying and meaning are separated by the intrinsic generality of language that identifies the true on the level of generality, whereas our immediate intention is to pick out the particular item given in sensation.

Hegel analyzes sense-certainty understood as an immediate, receptive grasp of what is as it is, apprehension without either comprehension or interpretation of any kind. "Our approach to the object must also be *immediate* or *receptive*, hence altering nothing in it as it presents itself and in grasping it refraining from comprehending it [von dem Auffassen das Begreifen abzuhalten]" (§90, 58*). Those committed to the English form of empiricism maintain that immediate experience is the only source of knowledge. Locke typically holds that simple ideas are always correct since "can none of them [i.e., simple ideas] be false in respect of things existing outside us."¹¹ This generally Lockean view remains popular. In our time it is reformulated by such Vienna Circle

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theorists as Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick, who are concerned with so-called protocol sentences (*Protokollsätze*), and sense datum theorists, such as A. J. Ayer, who desire to reconstruct perceptions out of sensa. Hegel rejects this Lockean view, since he denies that immediate knowledge is the "richest" and "truest" kind of knowledge. It is in fact the very opposite, since "this *certainty* proves itself to be the most abstract and poorest *truth*" (§91, 58*).

Sense-certainty can tell us only that something is, or that it exists, but not what it is. "All that it says about what it knows is just that it is" (§91, 58). We can only know what it is through other, richer, forms of knowledge. Sense-certainty yields no more than a bare awareness of existence in which "the singular consciousness [i.e., the individual] knows a pure 'This', or single item" (§91, 59).

Hegel, who has so far denied that sense-certainty offers anything more than the poorest kind of knowledge, now attacks the very idea of immediate knowledge. What appears to be immediate knowledge, a pure 'This', is in fact not immediate at all but "an *instance* [*Beispiel*] of it" (§92, 59). Sense-certainty concerns something, such as an object, that is certain for

someone. "I have this certainty through some-thing else, viz. the thing [die Sache]; and it is similarly in sense-certainty through something else, viz. through the 'I' " (§92, 59*). The distinction between immediacy and mediacy is not imposed by us but is in sense-certainty that itself distinguishes between "the essence [Wesen] and the instance, the mediate and the immediate" (§93, 59). This leads us to inquire if the essence is really directly given, a question to which we can respond through careful scrutiny of so-called immediate experience.

We already know that immediate experience provides no more than a 'This'. To ask this question, we need to ask "*What is the This?*" (§95, 59*). The word *This* is a demonstrative, belonging to the general class of indexicals that denote relative to a speaker. To further specify this demonstrative, we must add such other demonstratives and adverbs as *Here* and *Now*. Any effort to specify or otherwise to identify what we learn through sense-certainty requires us to appeal to demonstratives (e.g., 'this') and adverbs (e.g. 'now'). Yet there is a distinction between what is given in experience and the universals we employ to characterize whatever is given in experience. Each of the demonstratives and adverbs can be falsified by observation. For instance, the word *here* that I apply to an experienced object at one moment may not apply at another moment.

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This suggests four points deriving from the disparity between demonstratives and what is in fact given in immediate experience. First, the truth of immediate experience is what remains, namely, the demonstratives and adverbs that characterize the given in general terms, or predicates. "Such a simple of this kind, which is through negation, which *is* neither This nor That, a *not-this*, and is with equal indifference This as well as That—such a thing we call a *universal* [Allgemeines]" (§96, 60*). Second, immediate experience yields knowledge through universals only. "So it is in fact the universal [das Allgemeine] that is the true [content] of sense-certainty" (§96, 60). Third, there is an intrinsic difference between language that always refers universally and particulars given in experience. There is necessarily a disparity between what we say and mean, since "it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*" (§97, 60). Among recent philosophers, Derrida has best understood this idea, which he demonstrates through his deconstruction of any form of definite reference.¹² Fourth, immediate experience itself constitutes no more than mere existence since "*pure being* therefore remains its essence" (§99, 61 *).

This result reverses what we began with since the immediate given that appeared to be essential as the truth turns out not to be true at all. For the certainty that we seek in knowledge, and that we initially describe through demonstratives and adverbs, is found, not in the object, but in the subject's view of it. "Its truth is in the object as *my* object, or in the *meaning* [Meinen]; it is because I know about it" (§100, 61*). Since immediate experience depends on the subject, the subject pole must be examined.

The examination of the subject is intended to free claims to know from dependency on an individual subject. Obviously, claims for "*my seeing, hearing, and so on*" (§101, 61) depend on me. Yet different subjects have different experiences. For Hegel, knowledge claims depend on a subject understood as a person, but not on any particular person, or on any particular observation since "what does not disappear in all this is the 'I' as *universal*" (§102, 62). More generally, universal knowledge does not concern the view of this particular individual, or the particular thing in view. In fact, it could not since when Science is faced with the demand—as if it were an acid test it could not pass—that it should deduce, construct, find a priori, or however it is put, something called 'this thing' or 'this one man', it is reasonable that the demand should say which 'this thing', or which 'this particular man' is meant; but it is impossible to say this. (§102, 62)

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It follows that knowledge depends neither on this particular object nor on this particular subject. We have already become aware of the distinction between this particular existent object and its properties, or universals that can be asserted about it as its truth. This same distinction can be drawn for both subject and object. "Sense-certainty experiences, hence, that its essence is neither in the object, nor in the I, and immediacy is neither the immediacy of one or the other; for in both what I mean is rather inessential, and the object and the I are universal" (§103, 62*). In fact, the immediacy of the immediately given is unconcerned with what happens contingently to be the case, for instance, with "the otherness of the 'Here', as a tree which passes over into a 'Here' that is not a tree" (§104, 62), and so on.

Hegel now shows that the demonstratives and adverbs we employ to qualify what is immediately given in experience are universals by considering as an illustration 'Now', as in "the 'Now' as day which changes into a 'Now' that is night" (§104, 62). Obviously, the particular 'now' we point to at any given moment immediately ceases to be. Playing on the similarity in German between the past perfect "has been" (*ist gewesen*) ^¾ for the verb *Sein* = "to be"—and "essence" (*Wesen*), Hegel notes, "But what has *been* [*ist gewesen*] is in fact *no essence* [*Wesen*]; it is *not*, but we were concerned with being" (§106, 63*).

The effort to point out something as now, anything as now, yields no more than a collection of different 'Nows' whose message is "Now is a *universal*" (§107, 64). A similar observation can be made for any other general descriptive word, such as *Here*. For immediate experience, or sense-certainty, is not a single event but a developmental process. "It is clear that the dialectic of sense-certainty is nothing else but the simple history of its movement or of its experience, and sense-certainty itself is nothing else but just this history" (§109, 64). Since the most immediate kind of knowledge concerns what is inherently unstable and constantly changing, it cannot count as universal experience.

In drawing the moral of his complex analysis, Hegel again affirms that particular objects, such as the pink elephant I am now contemplating, cannot be picked out through language that is intrinsically universal. Whatever can be said about individual things is said in words that are themselves not specific but general. What we know, when we know, about something immediately given is known about its general properties. In playing on the etymological similarity in German between "to take up" (*aufnehmen*) and "to perceive" (*wahrnehmen*), Hegel concludes that knowledge is not at all immediate but mediate. For when I

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know an object through experience "I take it up, as it is in truth, and instead of knowing an immediacy, I *perceive it*" (§110, 66*).

Perception: Or the Thing and Deception

In his account of perception, Hegel studies a frequent theme in modern philosophy,¹³ where perception is typically understood as "the discovery, by means of the senses, of the existence and properties of the external world."¹⁴ Descartes offers an early version of the causal theory of perception. In very different language, Kant later restates Descartes's causal explanation of perception in his analysis of the relation of the phenomena given in experience, considered as appearances, to things in themselves.

Accounts of perception routinely consider under this single heading what Hegel considers separately as sensation, perception, and understanding. For Hegel, sense-certainty exhibits a basic self-contradiction between an interest in truth as universal and a concern with the 'this', whereas perception takes what is given as universal. "Immediate certainty does not take over the truth, for its truth is the universal, whereas it wants to apprehend the This. By contrast, perception takes the existing [*das Seiende*] for it as universal" (§111, 67*).

Like Kant, Hegel emphasizes the active role of the subject in shaping what we perceive. Perception further differs from sensation in that the subject is not merely passive but active in pointing out the object, or what is perceived. Again like Kant, Hegel stresses the objectivity of perceptual knowledge. Unlike sensation that just occurs, perception is characterized by necessity. He correlates the movement of pointing out and the object pointed out in writing "this *perception*, that *object*" (§111, 67*). (Miller's translation has the locution "simple event," which does not appear in the German and only confuses a difficult passage.) For the movement of perception and the object perceived are the same.

Hegel immediately proceeds to redefine the object that has so far been described as a process. In "Sense-Certainty," we learned that universals are suggested by particulars. In his analysis of knowledge as knowledge of instantiated universals, Hegel generally follows Aristotle. Like Aristotle, he maintains we do not know particulars; we only know universals.¹⁵ Further like Aristotle, he maintains that it is a mistake to separate the universals, or general terms, from the particulars.¹⁶ Hegel

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follows the Aristotelian idea that universals are not immediate, or immediately given, but are rather always instantiated in the object, or mediate, in his idea of the "*mediated universal*" (§112, 67). He now describes the perceptual object, distantly following Aristotle's

idea of primary being¹⁷ as "the thing with many properties [Eigenschaften]" (§112, 67). The properties, or universals, are given in perception but not in sensation that yields no more than the contradiction above between general terms and particular objects.

Since any object whatsoever seems to be a 'This', any 'This' turns into a 'not-This', and immediate sensation turns into perception. Hegel introduces the term "sublation" to describe the process in which one stage is negated and then transformed into a further, higher stage that builds on it. "*Sublation [Aufheben]* expounds its true twofold meaning which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a *negating* and a *preserving [Aufbewahren]*" (§113, 68*). Through this new concept, Hegel stresses that the developmental process of knowledge preserves what is true (*wahr*) in the prior moment. This is clear to the German reader in the terms "*Aufbewahren*," meaning "to keep, to store," and "*bewahren*," meaning "to keep, to preserve," although Hegel's claim is obscured in translation. In the negation of the singular object, the 'This' "preserves [*bewahrt*]" its immediacy and is itself sensuous, but it is a universal immediacy" (§113, 68*).

The properties, or mediated universals, coexist in the individual thing. A grain of salt, for instance, has a whole series of different properties. The different properties of anything given in consciousness are what they are through their difference from other properties. Properties are said to be opposed to each other and to what they qualify, namely, the object in which they can be said to inhere as "the *moment of negation*" (§114, 69). The perceptual object (§115) includes "(a) the indifferent, passive universality, the Also of the many properties, or rather *Matters*; (b) simple negation, or the One, the exclusion of contrary properties; and the many *properties* themselves, the relation of the two initial moments" (§115, 68*). A property only is one when it is instantiated, or combines both universality and singularity in the instantiated quality.

Truth and error concern the perceptual object. Perceptual truth, defined as pure apprehension (*reines Auffassen*) of the object as a thing without either adding or subtracting anything to it, presupposes a direct grasp of the object as it is. Perception of the object "has only to *take it*, and to behave as pure apprehension [*reines Auffassen*]" (§116,

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70*). Error is merely the incorrect apprehension of the object, not as it is, but as it is not. The standard of perceptual truth is self-identity between the object as it is perceived and as it is. Error, or diversity, concerns its perception, not the self-identical object.

The description of the perceptual object is followed by a description of "what consciousness experiences in its actual perceiving" (§117, 70). This confirms the points just made with respect to the object as it develops in consciousness. This development includes an initial singularity that is later worked up as a series of universals and that finally becomes a series of instantiated properties. The subject constitutes what it perceives. The truth of perception "is reflection out of the True and into itself" that is "not a simple pure apprehension, since in its apprehension [the subject] is at the same time reflected out of the True and into itself" (§118, 71). In understanding that it is at the origin, say, of its misperception of the object, the subject becomes aware of itself as the perceptual source.

Hegel now takes up the vexed distinction between primary and secondary qualities, roughly properties of the independent object and properties of the object as perceived. In his famous wax example, through his distinction between sensation and perception, Descartes depicts perception as an intuition of the mind, or a judgment, which makes possible what he sees.¹⁸ In his reply to Thomas Hobbes, he stresses that the various qualities of the wax do not belong to what it is, which he calls its formal nature.¹⁹ On the contrary, Locke argues in favor of primary, or simple, ideas as objectively true, since they cannot be false with respect to external things.²⁰ For Hegel, an existing object is both a unity, verifiable in sensation, and a perceptual diversity dependent on the way the perceiver "constitutes" its perception. "So in point of fact, the Thing is white only to *our eyes*, also tart to *our tongue*, also cubical to *our touch*, and so on" (§119, 72).

George Berkeley criticizes Descartes and Locke in arguing that all qualities are secondary.²¹ Hegel is close to Berkeley in arguing that perceptual qualities are not absolute but relative to the perceptual object. Perception of the object as a thing with many properties is correct, since "the Thing is perceived as what is true" (§120, 73). In perception, "the Thing itself is *the subsistence of the many different and independent properties*" (§121, 73*).

In perception, there is a distinction between the way something appears and the way it is. In reflection, we become aware that the subject perceives a thing in a specific manner, "the way that the Thing *exhibits*

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itself[darstellt] for the consciousness apprehending it," but that the object "is at the same time *reflected* out of the way in which it presents itself to consciousness and *into itself*" (§122, 74*). The perceptual object is as it appears for us and as it is in itself, as well as the movement between these two poles. For "the object is now for consciousness the whole movement which was previously shared between the object and consciousness" (§123, 74). The difference is not subjective but objective. The object is said to have a "contradiction in its objective essence" that attaches to "the single separated Thing itself" (§124, 75).

In perception, the subject's contribution is to bring the many properties of the thing together in a unified object. This in turn presupposes that the perceptual object occurs within consciousness as a unity and as a diversity. For the subject, the object is as it is in-itself, as a postulated entity in independence of perception, as well as for a perceiver, or for-us. The object is what it is as a determinate thing through its relation to other such things, with which it can be said to be "in conflict."

Any perceptual object is what it is through its relation to other things and, eventually, other subjects. It is what it is for others through its relation to them. The absolute character of the thing is, then, relative to other things. "It is just through the *absolute character* of the Thing and its opposition that it *relates* itself to *others*, and is essentially only this relating" (§125, 75-76).

The assertion that a thing is constituted by its relations to other things is important for other parts of the theory. Hegel's famous discussion of the relation of Master and Slave in the next chapter depends on the conflictual interrelation between conscious individuals. Later on in the *Phenomenology* and again in the *Encyclopedia*, he maintains that we only become self-aware, or self-conscious, conscious of ourselves, through our relation to others.[22](#)

The account of perception reveals that the objective qualities, or very being, of a thing are not absolute but constituted through relation. "The Thing is posited as being *for itself*, or as the absolute negation of all otherness, therefore as absolute, only as self-related negation; but this *self*-related negation is the sublation of *itself*, or the having of its essence in another" (§126, 76*). In fact, the discussion of the perceptual object has been leading up to this view of the thing as both a unity as it is, or exists, and as a perceptual diversity for an observer. Hegel expresses the dual aspects of the object as a unity and as a diversity in saying that it is "*the opposite of itself: it is for itself, so far as it is for another, and it is for another, so far as it is for itself*" (§128, 76).

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Like sensation that turns into perception, the perceptual object is also unstable. It is both the qualities, or predicates, that are instantiated in something and the qualities, or predicates, themselves. Since these are merely different ways in which the object is perceived, or for-us, Hegel says that we have now entered "the realm of the Understanding" (§129, 77). Understanding (*Verstand*) is Kant's term for the faculty of knowledge that, when applied to the sensory input, "constitutes" the perceptual object.[23](#) We reach this level when we realize that the perceptual object is "constituted" by us as a condition of its perception.

In the development from sensation to perception, mere immediate certainty is replaced by instantiated universality, or "*sensuous universality*" (§130, 77). The same object appears from two different perspectives: as it is for us, namely, as universal, since perception is intrinsically composed of universalities; but also as it is in itself, namely, as a single thing, or "true singularity" (§130, 77*). Mere existence is an undifferentiated unity, whereas perception reveals a disunified diversity. What was merely meant on the level of immediate sensation is replaced in perception through an unresolved dualism, which opposes unity and diversity, the same dualism that is already present in the designation of the perceptual object as the thing with many qualities. This is a dualism between the way the object is in-itself and the way it is for-us, that is, a dualism between its unity and its many properties.

The difficulty that now arises is a version of what is usually known as the problem of the one and the many, which is an ancestor of the problem of universals. Plato introduces the concept of participation (*methexis*) to understand the relation of particular things to forms, or ideas. Aristotle criticizes this view, among other reasons, on the grounds that it generates an

infinite regress.²⁴ Understanding, which Hegel elucidates under the heading of sound common sense (*der gesunde Menschenverstand*), fails to unify the perceptual object as both a unity and a diversity. We are meant to infer that Kant, who insists on the unity of the perceptual object, fails to elucidate it.

For the ordinary person, the philosopher is concerned with mere "mental entities," whereas he is in fact concerned with "wholly substantial material and content" (§131, 78). The philosopher considers such entities "in their specific determinateness," hence as concrete, whereas the ordinary person is preoccupied with "abstraction" (§131, 78). The ordinary person regards as essential what is in fact a mere play of unessential aspects that he hypostasizes. Common sense runs astray in tak-

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ing the abstract for the concrete, in failing to recognize characteristics such as white, cubical, tart, and so on, as specific determinateness.

Force and Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World

Perception, which cannot explain the unity of the perceptual object, bequeaths an unresolved dualism between sensation and perception. Empiricism founds knowledge on what is given in experience.²⁵ Since the unity of the object necessary for a theory of knowledge cannot be explained solely within perception, empiricism of all kinds is forced beyond perception in order to explain it theoretically.

The references to force and understanding in the title of this passage concern Newton and Kant, authors of the leading scientific and philosophical theories of the day. Both Newton and Kant maintain that knowledge begins in experience; both explain perception through a causal analysis proceeding beyond it. We have already noted that understanding is a peculiarly Kantian term. The concept of force, which is central to Newtonian mechanics, is very old. It goes back, although not necessarily under that name, to pre-Socratic philosophy, where it appears in various forms as a principle of motion. The term "force" is used by Newton, then Kant, and later Herder. Newton understands force as an impulse producing a change of motion, as in the famous second law of motion: $F = ma$. Kant criticizes force, which Newton takes as an ultimate explanatory principle, as a derivative form of causality.²⁶ Herder, Kant's former student, uses force to refer to an idea that is not rationally explicable but that is necessarily assumed for any psychological interpretation of existence. Hegel, who was aware of the connection between Newton and Herder, criticizes the concept of force, including Newton's and Herder's views of it, in the *Encyclopedia*.²⁷

The section "Force and Understanding," longer than the two sections "Sense-Certainty" and "Perception" combined, is a good deal more complex, even by Hegelian standards, approaching, in the account of the inverted world, the limits of human comprehension. Even the main line of thought is not always obvious.

Hegel begins by summarizing the preceding discussion to show that perception fails to resolve the problem of knowledge. Sensation, he repeats, does not provide the perceptual qualities secured in seeing and

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hearing that are finally reached in what he calls the unconditioned universal, his term for what is true without reservation. Perception of such qualities as blue, round, hard, and so on, is not false. Yet it is correct only when the universal and the individual object, the thing and its qualities, are conceived as a unity that is the same as it exists and as it is known.

Perception yields qualities such as green, young, big, and so on. Such qualities can be taken either as the way the object is for a subject, or being-for-self, as something essential related to what is inessential, or just as that of which we are conscious. So far, the subject has failed to recognize that the object of which it is conscious is its own object. "This unconditioned universal, which is now the true object of consciousness, is still just an object for it; consciousness has not yet grasped the Concept of the unconditioned as Concept" (§132, 79*). For the subject, which takes the object to be solely objective, is still unaware of its role in constituting its object. Yet truth is only implicit unless the subject is aware that it has a hand in what it perceives. In encountering the object, in a sense we encounter and become aware of ourselves. For "in this completely developed object, which presents itself to

consciousness as a being [ein Seiendes], it [i.e., the subject] first becomes a comprehending consciousness" (§133, 80*).

The unconditioned universal is posited as the identity between opposing poles of perception, namely, between the way the object is and the way it is perceived, that is, "the unity of 'being-for-self' and 'being-for-another'" (§134, 80). When we take the unconditioned universal as our object, a difficulty, similar to that between sensation and perception, arises in the distinction between "form and content" (§135, 81). Perception reveals an unstable relation between particular qualities, each of which is different from the others, which form both a diversity as well as a unity, and whose unity and diversity constantly change into each other. Perhaps thinking of the reliance on force in physical theory to explain acceleration, Hegel uses this concept to designate the transition of unity into diversity and conversely.

It is in the nature of force to express itself.

Or, the posited as independent [die selbstständig gesetzten] directly goes into their unity, and their unity directly into diversity, and this again back to reduction [i.e., to unity]. But this movement is called Force [Kraft]. One of its moments, the dispersal of the independent matters, is the externalization [Äußerung] of Force; but Force, taken as that in which they have disappeared, is Force proper, Force which has been driven back into itself from its externalization. (§136, 81*)

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Force enables the cognitive subject to grasp the unity of sensation and perception, existence and essence, or that the object of knowledge is and what it is.

Hegel's use of the Newtonian term "force" should not obscure the way this conceptual model is exemplified in the Newtonian and Kantian theories alike. This is obvious for Newtonian physics, but perhaps less obvious in Kant's critical philosophy, which features an unclarified relation through which the independent object "affects" the subject as a condition of experience. Kant intends to ground, or to justify the possibility of, Newtonian science.²⁸ Hegel draws attention to the link between Newton and Kant in writing that "the Understanding, to which the Concept of Force belongs, is strictly speaking the *Concept* which sustains the different moments as different; for, *in themselves*, they are not supposed to be different. Consequently, the difference exists only in thought" (§136, 82*). Force allows us to understand unity in difference and difference in unity for perceptual phenomena.

Philosophers prior to Hegel objected to the tendency to hypostasize force as a metaphysical entity that, say, Berkeley regards as no more than a convenient fiction.²⁹ With great dialectical skill, Hegel identifies a series of problems arising from the widespread effort in philosophy and physics to explain perceptual experience through a concept that operates behind it. One problem is that, as the conceptual "glue" permitting us to comprehend how the object is both a unity and a diversity, force is supposedly both present to mind and in the object itself, or "equally in its own self what it is *for an other*" (§136, 82). Another is that, on reflection, the single force is replaced by two forces, one that manifests itself in the diverse phenomena of experience and another that "solicits" the former to do so.

The reason for this latter claim is unclear. Hegel may be thinking of Newton's third law of motion that posits the equivalence of action and reaction. He may also be thinking of the way that, through the parallelogram of forces, any particular force can be considered as the resultant of two other vectors of force. It is at least clear that the concept of force requires two forces, each of which is independent, and each of which is posited in order to make sense of the other. If we distinguish between the manifestation of force and force itself, then it is merely a convenient concept. "Thus the truth of Force remains only the Thought [Gedanke] of it" (§141, 86).

We can, for instance, regard the manifestation as the essence and what is manifested as merely potential, or conversely. Hegel here again has in mind the familiar Kantian theory according to which what we

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perceive is the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of what appears that cannot itself be given in experience. In the latter case, the object appears to the subject, or understanding, as the outward form of an inner reality, the whole mediated by force.

The middle term, which unites the two extremes, the Understanding and the inner world, is the developed being of Force which, for the Understanding itself, is henceforth only a vanishing. It is therefore called appearance; for we call false appearance [Schein] being that is directly and in its own self a non-being. (§143, 86-87*)

Hegel now considers force as unifying the perceptual object, whose truth lies in an inner reality, in "a *supersensible* world which from now on is the *true* world" (§144, 87*). With Kant in mind, Hegel notes that the inner world is only the pure beyond. We know nothing about it.

Yet Hegel does not like Kant say it is unknowable, but only that "consciousness does not as yet find itself in it" (§146, 88).

It is well known that for Plato the visible world depends in some unclarified way on an invisible, supersensible world as its cause. Thinking of Kant, who sought to ground the world of appearance in mental activity, Hegel now inverts the Platonic argument in claiming that the inner, or supersensible, world "*comes from* the world of appearance that is its mediation" (§147, 89*). The starting point lies in experience, or the so-called world of appearance, which we only surpass to explain what is given in experience, but that cannot be explained within it.

Kant was deeply knowledgeable about natural science. His view that inner being manifests itself through force in externality is closely related to natural scientific law that is routinely used to postulate a hidden unity subtending perceptual multiplicity. Hegel, who rejects any appeal to what is not itself given in experience, identifies a series of difficulties in this approach. Since force requires two forces, Hegel claims that there is a unifying principle called the *law of Force* (§148, 90) underlying the play of forces. In regarding law as the regularity of force, he identifies something common to the critical philosophy that places the principle of order in the understanding and to classical mechanics that postulates laws governing the natural world. Both explain phenomenal diversity through an underlying unity, or law, lodged in the supersensible realm, which enables the observer to detect unity, or stability, in the flux of appearance. Hegel characterizes law as "the *stable* image of unstable appearance" (§149, 90).

Hegel is extremely critical of law within natural science and, later in

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the book, of Kant's view of moral law. The generality of law enables it to describe, but finally not to account for, particular cases. Hegel concedes that, in his words, "this realm of laws is truly the truth of the Understanding, which in difference, in the law, has its content" (§150, 91*). Yet he criticizes law as only providing for phenomenal difference in a general, indeterminate manner.

Philosophers typically insist on specificity, as illustrated by the concern of Husserl and Heidegger to go to things themselves (*zu den Sachen selbst*), in short, to grasp particulars through direct intuition of givenness.³⁰ For Hegel, as laws become more general, hence more powerful, as they explain more and more, they also explain less and less, since they lose specificity, or the capacity to grasp the individual things.

Hegel sharpens his critique of law with respect to Newton. In the Scholium to his great *Principia*, Newton famously, but perhaps inaccurately, claims to deduce his view from phenomena while avoiding hypotheses of either a metaphysical or a physical type.³¹ Hegel regarded Newton's opposition to metaphysics as an opposition to thought. He specifically singles out Newton's famous inverse square law in writing that "the one law which combines in itself the laws of falling bodies and of the motions of the heavenly bodies, in fact expresses neither law" (§150, 91*). Universal attraction, or gravitation, or "the pure Concept of law" (§151, 92), transcends specific laws. But it lacks "an inner *necessity*" relating other, more specific laws as well as the multiple phenomena in a "simple unity" located in "the inner world" (§151, 92). In the cases of gravitation and electricity, the definition of the law "does not contain the *necessity of its existence*" (§152, 93), which turns out to be merely contingent. Through a reference to Galileo's "law of motion" (§153, 93),³² Hegel further complains that space and time are distinguished, although their parts are not.

After his criticism of specific laws, Hegel criticizes scientific explanation (*Erklären*) in general. Natural science fails to grasp individual objects through general laws, since explanation operates with distinctions that fall within the understanding but not within what is to be explained. In a word, "this inner difference still falls . . . only within the Understanding, and is not yet *posited in the affair itself [an der Sache selbst gesetzt]*" (§154, 94*). Explanation in physical theory "not only explains nothing, but . . . really says nothing at all" (§155, 95). Yet it is unclear what an alternative, Hegelian view of natural science would look like. It is not obvious that, or how, natural science could, or should, formulate laws that are both general and specific, accounting both for

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things in general and for particulars. Hegel later seems to concede as much in the *Encyclopedia*, in conceding that even the Philosophy of Nature cannot account for every phenomenon.³³

For Hegel, as noted, change in the object is merely change in the subject's view of it. If change is merely change of understanding that is "the *inner being* of things" (§156, 95), then it is also "a *law of appearance itself*" (§156, 96) whose differences are not differences at all. For what underlies them is force as a simple unity expressed through law. This suggests a distinction in kind between change in the object and change in the understanding, or two sets of laws: the one governing the inner being of the object that we seek to grasp through a law that relates the multiple ways it appears and the other one governing what the understanding itself brings forth.

Explanation that surpasses experience, as it must for Newton and Kant, results in not one but two contrasting explanatory models opposed at every step. This yields an opposition between the merely empiricist, natural scientific view, illustrated in Newtonian mechanics, and the philosophical view that combines empiricism and idealism, illustrated in Kant's critical philosophy.

Hegel contrasts these two models in an extremely difficult passage, whose interpretation is uncertain,³⁴ based on a distinction between the world and the so-called inverted world. There is an obvious opposition between Newton, the natural scientist, and Kant, the philosopher, each of whom explains the world of experience through a further, supersensible world, but from opposing perspectives. Newton derives laws from experience, whereas Kant formulates laws intended to ground the possibility of experience. Hegel illustrates difficulties that arise in any position locating laws in a supersensible other world by inventing the peculiar conception of an "inverted" world in which the inner is the outer and the outer is the inner.

He has earlier used this and related terms in other contexts. In his introduction to the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*, perhaps referring to Kant, he remarks that philosophy sets itself through the understanding against common sense in "an inverted world [eine verkehrte Welt]." ³⁵ He frequently employs forms of the verb *verkehren*, meaning in the first instance "to reverse, to invert, to turn upside down," and so on, to indicate a basic error.

The normal world and its inverted counterpart, which are polar opposites, need to be brought into relation. As a consequence of rejecting the original approach embodied in "the first supersensible world, the

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tranquil kingdom of laws, the immediate copy of the perceived world is changed into its opposite" (§157, 96). Behind florid rhetoric that at times approaches impenetrability, Hegel suggests that the critical philosophy, which claims to ground Newtonian physics, must "include" it, as the supersensible world "includes" the normal world.

For Plato, as the science of the sciences philosophy grounds, or justifies, its own and all other claims to know. Kant, who famously claimed to understand Plato better than he understood himself, applies a version of this approach to modern science and modern mathematics. For Kant, mathematics, Newtonian science, and the future science of metaphysics must be "grounded" in a philosophical explanation of their possibility. Probably referring to the Kantian inversion of the Newtonian world, Hegel writes that the supersensible world, which is the inverted world, has at the same time overarched [über(ge)griffen] the other world and itself; it is for itself inverted, that is the inverted of itself. It is itself and its inversion in a unity. Only in this way is the difference as internal, or difference in itself, or as infinity [Unendlichkeit]. (§160, 99*)

By "infinity" Hegel means "a law that contains immanent necessity." Such a law is precisely infinite, or unlimited, in virtue of its ability to grasp the particular, since "all the moments of appearance [Erscheinung] are taken up into the inner world" (§161, 99). Infinity is also called "the absolute Notion," as "the simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal blood" (§162, 101). The distinction between the knower and the known, or between the cognitive subject and the object, is overcome when, on a deeper level, the subject and object poles form a unity. In reflection, the subject becomes aware that whatever is known in consciousness just is in consciousness.

What this means can be illustrated through a trivial example. Hegel contends that when we examine the process of cognition, we become aware not only that in a sense the snow that I see on the ground outside my window is my consciousness or, to put the point bluntly but not inaccurately, in a sense I am the snow but also that in a way I am everything of which I can be aware. This is a version of the idealist thesis that what is only is for a subject, maintained in German idealism by Kant and earlier by, say, Berkeley and Aristotle. For the latter, the subject, or the soul, is in a way the object as a condition of knowledge.³⁶

Hegel's point is related to the modern view of subjectivity. For Kant,

we finally experience and know only ourselves. Extending this idea, Hegel again insists that cognition rests on self-consciousness. He argues for this thesis by recapitulating his analysis in this section. Infinity, or the capacity to go beyond any and all differences, is present from the beginning, and displayed in appearance. Yet we only become aware of this capacity when we reflect on the nature of explanation that, as Hegel notes, "is primarily only a description of what self-consciousness is" (§163, 101). For instance, the rigor of explanation through laws is only the rigor of the understanding. Understanding, featured in Kant, necessarily falls short of infinity in failing to grasp the object, hence in failing to grasp concreteness.

It is obvious that the dualistic approach featured in Newton and Kant is unable either to overcome dualism or to grasp the object. The object can only be grasped through a turn to the concept that, for Hegel, is basic to science of all kinds, including natural science and philosophy. For "the same object that is in a sensuous covering for the Understanding is for us in its essential form as a pure Concept. This grasp [Auffassen] of the difference as it *in truth is*, or the grasp of *infinity* as such, is *for us*, or *in itself*. The exposition of its Concept belongs to Science" (§164, 102*).

The first step beyond the understanding is to realize that, in becoming aware of an external object in principle independent of us, we are in fact only aware of ourselves. Hegel reinforces this message, whose weight will emerge in the next section, in writing,

The necessary advance from the previous shapes of consciousness for which their truth was a Thing, an 'other' than themselves, expresses just this, that not only is consciousness of a thing possible only for a self-consciousness, but that this alone is the truth of those shapes. But it is only for us that this truth exists, not yet for consciousness. But self-consciousness has at first become for itself, not yet as a unity with consciousness in general. (§164, 102*)

Hegel now sums up his discussion in a way that obviously foreshadows the theory of self-consciousness he will expound in the next chapter. Again stressing the role of the subject in perception, he remarks that "we see that in the *inner* world of appearance, the Understanding in truth comes to experience nothing else but appearance [. . .] in fact only *itself*" (§165, 102-103*). Consciousness perceives itself in a unity with the supersensible world through the appearance. The appearance is, then, only a mediating term between the subject that ex-

periences and knows and the object as essence underlying the object as appearance.

Kant's understanding of objects of experience and knowledge as mere appearances of an independent reality suggests two views of knowledge. Kant limits experience and knowledge to appearances. This line of argument leads, as Salomon Maimon, Kant's contemporary, notes, to skepticism, since we can never penetrate behind appearances to know essences.³⁷ The other, contrary interpretation is to understand the separation between independent reality and appearance as relative. For, under specifiable conditions, the subject can go beyond the appearance to grasp reality, or the essence, if the essence can appear within consciousness. The difficulty is to explain how this is possible. Since in a "constructivist" approach, such as Kant's, we "produce" what we experience and know, it must be that whatever we find when we go behind the curtain of appearance is put there by ourselves. It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen. But at the same time it is evident that we cannot without more ado go there straightaway. For this knowledge of what is the truth of appearance, as ordinarily conceived, and of its inner being, is itself only a result of a complex movement whereby the modes of consciousness [such as] 'meaning', perceiving, and the Understanding vanish; and it will be equally evident that the cognition of what consciousness knows in knowing itself, requires a still more complex movement, the exposition of which is contained in what follows. (§165, 103*)

Hegel here makes four points that will be decisive for the remainder of the book. First, like Kant, he commits himself to the view that there is knowledge, since essence, what Kant calls the thing-in-itself, appears within consciousness. He hence commits himself to making good on the spirit, if not the letter, of the Kantian theory of knowledge. This is a point that Kant fails to explain since he has no coherent account of the relation of the appearance to what appears, of the representation to what is represented. Second, Hegel acknowledges it is not possible without further discussion to go beyond appearance to essence. This is a reaffirmation of his denial of any form of immediate knowledge, a view he shares with Kant. Third, he again stresses the role of the subject, the key for Kant and all philosophy since Descartes, which in a different way will also be the key for his own theory. Fourth, he indicates that, since we cannot go beyond appearance to essence without

further development, it is necessary to burst the bounds of the Kantian conceptual framework to make good on the Kantian aim. Hegel immediately takes steps to do so in his analysis of self-consciousness that extends the Kantian problematic beyond the confines of the critical philosophy.

Chapter 4

"Self- Consciousness"

Hegel's move from consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) to self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*) is forced by the inability to formulate a satisfactory theory of knowledge on the level of consciousness. We cannot reach a unified conception of the object merely through a theory of consciousness. The analysis in "Force and Understanding" shows through the illustrations of Newton and Kant that efforts to comprehend the unity of the object from the perspective of consciousness end in dualism. Any account of knowledge must include an analysis of self-consciousness, since we can only account for consciousness through self-consciousness.

Freedom is a precondition of self-consciousness. Beginning with Descartes, freedom is a necessary condition of knowledge. The subject must become aware of itself in order to distinguish truth from error.¹ For Kant, we cannot know, but can only think, freedom,² which is a necessary presupposition of moral action. Fichte holds that we are free within the limits of the surrounding world, but within those limits we are absolutely free. For Hegel, freedom, like knowledge, only emerges within the social struggle that is the condition of self-consciousness.

In turning to self-consciousness, Hegel carries the spirit of the critical philosophy, as he understands it, beyond the letter of the theory. The problem of self-consciousness is already important in ancient philosophy as early as Plotinus. Hegel makes self-consciousness central to his reading of Descartes as the founder of modern philosophy through independent reason. We have already noted that Kant, who occasionally

uses the term "self-consciousness," has at most a nascent view of self-consciousness, as in his contention that it must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations.³ This amounts to the idea that when I am aware of something, I can always be self-aware. But he does not have an explicit theory of self-consciousness, which, in German idealism, only arises in Fichte.⁴ For Fichte, consciousness presupposes for its explanation self-consciousness.⁵ He maintains that all experience, by which he means all conscious experience, can be "deduced," or explained, from the very possibility of self-consciousness.

In his analysis of self-consciousness, Hegel pursues a Fichtean line of argument. Like Fichte, he holds that consciousness cannot account for itself. He follows Fichte's view of self-consciousness as limiting and conditioning consciousness. He shares Fichte's view that self-consciousness presupposes an interpersonal interaction.⁶ According to Hegel, freedom is not an original given but must be acquired through social struggle within the social context.

The Truth of Self-Certainty

One of the most original aspects of Hegel's theory of knowledge is his thorough analysis of the cognitive subject on a series of levels. Descartes and Kant regard the subject as an abstract epistemological principle that is not and cannot be equated with a person. Hegel, who regards the subject as a real human being, is in that respect closer to the early Fichte and to the British empiricists, particularly Locke⁷ and Hume.⁸ For Hegel, the problem of knowledge is nothing more than the problem of human knowledge. Since consciousness requires self-

consciousness as its condition, Hegel must show how human beings achieve the self-consciousness that is a necessary condition of knowledge. For self-consciousness is a necessary condition of consciousness of objects as experienced. His discussion of self-consciousness turns on an account of the real conditions of the emergence of self-consciousness in a social situation.

In entitling this section "The Truth of Self-Certainty," literally the truth of the certainty of oneself (*die Wahrheit der Gewißheit seiner selbst*), Hegel shifts his focus from the perceptual object given in consciousness to the subject that takes itself as an object. Descartes begins by doubting everything before claiming that the subject's existence is

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certain, or indubitable. For Descartes, the problem of knowledge comes down to how to justify the transition from the subject's certainty about its own existence to knowledge about the external world, from what is subjectively certain to what is objectively true. Obviously, what is certain is not therefore true, since truth is beyond certainty. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel criticizes Descartes's inability to make the transition from certainty to truth.⁹

For Hegel, who is concerned with the truth of what is certain, knowledge presupposes a distinction between the subject that knows and the object that is known in consciousness. What initially seemed to be an independent external object, or the object in itself, turned out to be only the way in which the object appears within consciousness. "What the object immediately was *in itself*—mere being in sense-certainty, the concrete thing of perception, and for the Understanding, a Force—proves to be in truth not this at all; instead, this *in-itself* turns out to be a mode in which the object is only for another" (§166, 104). Since the distinction between appearance and reality has been overcome, Descartes's problem has been resolved. Within consciousness we have "a certainty which is the same as its truth" (§166, 104*). The distinction between subject and object does not fall between a subject and an independent object, but rather within consciousness. In a word, consciousness distinguishes between itself and its object within consciousness, within which the knower and the known, or the concept and the object, coincide.

For the certainty is its own object, and consciousness is itself the truth. There is indeed an otherness [Anderssein]; consciousness namely makes a distinction, but one which is for it not a distinction. If we understand by Concept the movement of knowing, and by Object knowing as a tranquil unity, or as the 'I', we see that not only for us, but for knowing itself, the object corresponds to the Concept. (§166, 104*)

The distinction between subject and object (*Gegenstand*) falls within the subject, so that "I" is the content of the relation and the relation itself; it is itself opposed to an other and at the same time it spreads over [übergreift] this other that for it is only itself" (§166, 104*). Since in self-consciousness certainty and truth coincide, at this level we have arrived at the "realm of truth" (§167, 104).

As self-consciousness concerns self-knowing, the difficulty posed by knowledge of an independent object, "the knowing of an other" (§167, 105), has been transcended. Yet everything, including the existence of

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an independent object, is retained. For we only become self-conscious through "the return from otherness" (§167, 105), above all, through the relation of a person to another person.

The relation to any object whatsoever is a two-stage movement including the appearance of the object, whatever is to be known through sensation and perception, and the unity of itself with itself. This unity is not actual but a potential relation mediated through desire (*Begierde*). Desire is Hegel's version of the idea (e.g., Plato's *thumos*, Aristotle's *thaumazein*, Spinoza's *conatus*, Leibniz's *petites appétitions*, Fichte's *Streben*, and so on) that, as conscious human beings, we are forced out of ourselves and into the world. According to Hegel, "self-consciousness is *Desire* in general" (§167, 105). The cognitive subject is confronted with two types of object: the external thing it desires to know and itself. The movement of self-consciousness consists in satisfying desire by overcoming the difference between what is and what it desires in a unity between the subject and the object.

Once again, Hegel studies the object as both for us and in itself. From the latter perspective, it is alive, since "the object has become Life" (§168, 106). At a minimum, this means that the cognitive object has its own permanence (*Selbständigkeit*) (not independence, as Miller, following Baillie, says) as it develops within consciousness. Hegel

further defines the object's essence (*Wesen*), or what we seek to know, in florid terms as "infinity as being the sublation [Aufgehobensein] of all distinctions" (§169, 106*).

In the discussion of law in the chapter on consciousness, "infinity" was introduced to refer to the effort to grasp the particular. Here it is employed to indicate that when we know we have surpassed all obstacles to grasp what we know as it is. Hegel confirms this reading in remarking that the differences that we perceive are in the object of knowledge, since "the self-subsistent parts [selbständigen Glieder] are for themselves" (§170, 107*).

He further considers the object from two perspectives: as self-subsistent; and as exhibiting difference, hence as alive, since life is "a *process*" and "a *living thing*" (§171, 107). All objects of whatever kind change as our view of them changes, since "it is the whole round of this activity that constitutes Life" (§171, 108). For the development of what he calls life refers beyond itself, or "points to something other than itself, viz. to consciousness" (§173, 109).

Kant argues that an object only is one for an abstract cognitive subject. Hegel breaks with Kant in linking "objectivity" to the social na-

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ture of the subject. For it is desire that forces the subject out of itself into the world, where it becomes conscious of itself. To begin with, the subject, or self-consciousness, is no more than "this simple essence" (§173, 109) that develops in the interaction with its object, understood both as a thing and, in the next section, as a human being. A subject becomes self-conscious, or, in Cartesian language, "certain of itself," in bringing the other under its control, in a word "only by sublating this other that presents itself to him as self-subsistent life [selbständiges eben]" (§174, 109*). One way to achieve self-certainty is through the physical annihilation of the other.

Certain of the nothingness [Nichtigkeit] of this other, it posits this as its truth; destroys the subsistent object and thereby becomes certain of itself as true certainty, which has become objectively [auf gegenständliche Weise] for self-consciousness itself. (§174, 109)

Since self-consciousness requires consciousness of oneself as other, a person only satisfies desire through an object. Yet paradoxically, someone who becomes certain of himself and reaches satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) through annihilating others also becomes aware of the independence of the object. "In this satisfaction, however, experience makes it aware of the self-subsistent nature of its object" (§175, 109*). The object cannot be sublated, since it is the condition of the satisfaction of desire, hence of self-certainty.

In suggesting that self-awareness only arises in a relation to others, Hegel draws the lesson of the post-Kantian discussion. The post-Kantian idealists are separated from Kant by the French Revolution. Beginning with Fichte, the first great postrevolutionary philosopher, German idealism quickly abandoned Kant's transcendental approach to knowledge in favor of an increasingly psychologistic, even frankly anthropological, perspective. For Fichte, full self-consciousness requires a relation to another person.¹⁰ Hegel brilliantly expands this point in his account of the master-slave relation. If self-consciousness depends on a relation to another, and if the other cannot be destroyed, then the relation to the other must be a relation to the other not as a thing but as a person. It follows that "*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*" (§175, 110).

Hegel sums up his view of the subject as self-consciousness that seeks to satisfy desire by relating to objects, including others, or other self-consciousnesses. His summary has an anthropological tone that is central to his view of self-consciousness and to the remainder of the book.

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Self-consciousness includes pure, undifferentiated subjectivity, then desire and its satisfaction in the certainty that it is self-certain, or self-aware, and finally the truth of self-certainty that lies in the relation of one person to another, or "the duplication of self-consciousness" (§176, 110).

He expands his claim by pointing toward the conception of spirit. We are already aware that "there is a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness" (§177, 110*). In a word, we only are aware of who we are in and through our relation to others. Knowledge as such is inherently social, since it centrally depends on the relation among individual human beings. In a colorful passage, Hegel stakes his claim for a theory of knowledge based, not, as in Kant, on the abstract analysis of its conditions whatsoever, but on the human subject.

It is in self-consciousness, in the Concept of Spirit, that consciousness first finds its turning-point, where it leaves behind it the colorful show of the sensuous here-and-now and the nightlike void of the supersensible beyond,
and steps out into the spiritual daylight of the present. (§177, 110-111*)

A. Permanence and Impermanence of Self-Consciousness: Master and Slave

The discussion of self-consciousness is divided into two sections, "Permanence and Impermanence of Self-Consciousness" and "Freedom of Self-Consciousness." The former addresses what Miller translates as "Lordship [*Herrschaft*] and Bondage [*Knechtschaft*]." It is difficult to find an adequate word in English for *Knechtschaft*, from *Knecht*, meaning "servant, farmhand, serf, slave." The word *Bondage* has vaguely sexual undertones that are wholly unrelated to Hegel's discussion. A more literal, but less felicitous, translation for what is often called "the relation of master to slave" might be "mastership and servitude."

This justly celebrated passage, one of the most famous ones, not only in the *Phenomenology* but in the entire Hegelian corpus, has been repeatedly discussed,^{[11](#)} particularly from the Marxist perspective. It influenced Marx's theory of alienation and his reading of Hegel.^{[12](#)} It is the basis of Alexandre Kojève's groundbreaking reading of the *Phenomenology* as philosophical anthropology;^{[13](#)} and it is central for Georg Lukács's study of the young Hegel^{[14](#)} as well as for his later study of social ontology.^{[15](#)}

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We need to distinguish between the impact this famous discussion has had on Hegel's many readers and its function within his analysis of knowledge. For Descartes, we become conscious of ourselves since we cannot deny our personal existence. In noting that self-consciousness is a social product derived from interpersonal relations, Hegel shifts the account of knowledge from the logical reconstruction of the conditions of knowing, which is familiar in Descartes, in Kant, and, since Frege, in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, to analysis of the social world. Hegel further sees that self-awareness is not all or nothing but a question of degree. Like Rousseau, he understands social life as an ongoing struggle for recognition that can have vastly different outcomes. Both his exposition of the master-slave relation in the first section and his further exposition of free self-consciousness in the second section concern the social constitution of the cognitive subject.

The master-slave relation has been studied so often and so well that we can go quickly here. The three great modern social contract theorists, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, hold vastly different views. Unlike Locke, who holds there is enough for each person if only we would play by the rules, like Hobbes before him Rousseau regards society as the theater of a grim struggle for survival. Whereas Aristotle understands slavery as rooted in nature, Rousseau critically examines social slavery that arises unnaturally from the "failure" of the social contract. He famously remarks, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Many a one believes himself the master of others, and yet he is a greater slave than they."^{[16](#)} In prophetic anticipation of totalitarianism in our time, he further imagines a country in which all individuals are beholden to a single person as "only a case of master and slaves, not of a nation and its chief."^{[17](#)}

Clearly influenced by Rousseau, Hegel's analysis of the master-slave relation is suggestive on a number of levels, especially with respect to modern industrial society. His basic theme in this passage is social inequality, to which he later returns in remarks on poverty in modern society in the *Philosophy of Right*.^{[18](#)} At stake is whether social inequality is merely a contingent, or rather a necessary, feature of the social world. For modern industrial society is based on a fundamental difference between those who in different ways can be depicted as social masters and social slaves.

Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and many others contend that society rests on basic inequality. Still others, such as Kant and Marx, envisage a social context based on equality among free citizens. In his ethical writings

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and in his study "Perpetual Peace," Kant imagines a social setting in which each person would be treated as an end and not as a means. Marx analyzes modern industrial society under the heading of capitalism, where differences between individuals derive from their relation to the ownership of the means of production, or private property, which Locke

regards as more valuable than life itself. For Marx, a basically better form of life requires the abolition of social differences based on ownership of the means of production.

If self-consciousness is intrinsically social, then it depends on the inherently mutable social context. In this section, as its title suggests, Hegel is concerned with a social subject, whose self-awareness exhibits either permanency (*Selbstständigkeit*) or impermanence (*Unselbstständigkeit*), from *ständig*, meaning "lasting, always existing, ceaseless, without stopping, frequent," and so on. Permanency, which is related to social independence, or self-sufficiency, distantly echoes Aristotle's view of human happiness (*eudaimonia*) as autarky (*autarkeia*), or self-sufficient and lacking in nothing,¹⁹ as distinguished from "autarchy" meaning variously "absolute rule or despotism." Autarky especially concerns economic independence and self-sufficiency, as in Fichte's view of the closed commercial state.²⁰

In his reference to mastery (*Herrschaft*) and servitude (*Knechtschaft*) Hegel links his conception of social permanence to feudal social distinctions. "Herr," originally the feudal word for nobles who followed the princes and dukes in the royal hierarchy, is the usual title for a male still used in ordinary German. The noun is related to the verb *herrschen*, meaning "to rule" (*Herr*). The word *Knecht* replaced such earlier words as *Diener* and *Dienstmann*, which we can render in English as "servant," "liege man," "serf," or in contemporary language "worker." The verb *knechten* means "to enslave" and "to repress." In ordinary contemporary German, *Knechtschaft* means "unfreedom, belonging, dependency on, suppression," and so on.

The German terms in the title of the passage suggest a distinction between those who are self-sufficient, hence independent, and those who are not. Hegel's surprising point is that in inherently unstable relations of social inequality, the master is not self-sufficient but dependent on the slave. When such a relationship has finished evolving, the unexpected result is that the slave is the master of the master and the master is the slave of the slave. The relation of inequality remains, although its terms reverse themselves.

Hegel's reputation as a social liberal is justified. His liberalism is

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not restricted merely to his early period.²¹ He composed this passage against the backdrop of the still recent French Revolution. It is at least arguable that what is still the greatest political upheaval of modern times resulted from the emergence of social awareness. For the change in our way of looking at ourselves and our world leads to their transformation.

Hegel's description here of social inequality can be read as a powerful call to social change, even as an encoded revolutionary manifesto, recommending the rise of social consciousness as the indispensable precondition for basic social change. If the slave knows himself to be the truth of the relation, he can rise up to abolish the relation of master and slave in favor of another form of society. In insisting that the slave, not the master, is the truth of the relationship, Hegel suggests a revolutionary message that Marx quickly grasped in his theory of the proletariat as a revolutionary force. Marx based his view of self-consciousness as a revolutionary force,²² later expanded by Lukács,²³ on Hegel's analysis of the master-slave relation.

For Hegel, the social relationships among human beings can only assume three main shapes: the master's rule over the slave; or the slave's rule over the master; or finally a relation of mutual equality, as in Aristotle's view of friendship, in which there are neither masters nor slaves. Full self-consciousness depends on a relation of equality, what he sometimes calls mutual recognition.

His view of mutual recognition has an interesting cognitive implication. If full self-consciousness is a necessary condition of knowledge, then knowledge in the full sense of the term will only become a real possibility after fundamental social changes that have yet to occur. In that sense, Hegel does not here claim that there is knowledge, but rather merely points to what must happen for it to be possible.

Hegel's examination of the master-slave relation is unusually succinct. Postponing discussion of a relation of mutual equality, which he examines in any detail only in the *Encyclopedia*,²⁴ he here examines the first two instances. The first, more frequent situation, in which the master rules over and, if necessary, kills the slave, has a self-defeating outcome. The second, more interesting situation features a three-cornered relation in the inequality between two people that is physically mediated by the further relation of one of them, namely, the slave, to things.

Hegel begins by extending his claim that a person only satisfies desires, hence achieves satisfaction, through a relation to another person. What was earlier a relation between a human subject and an object has

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now been replaced by one between two subjects within a process of recognition. Clearly, Hegel is very interested in recognition, since the theme recurs several times later in the book.²⁵ The satisfaction of desire requires the recognition of one person as a person by another person. "Self-consciousness is *in* and *for itself in* virtue of the fact that it is in and for itself for an other, that is, it is only as recognized [ein Anerkanntes]" (§178, 111*). The discussion expounds social recognition as a dynamic process unfolding in an interpersonal relation.

Hegel's language here suggests a religious model. Someone who seeks recognition in social interaction "loses" and then "finds" himself in another, thereby sublating the other. In Kantian terms, for such a person the other person is not an "essence," or end in itself, but merely a means to its own end, since it sees "*itself in the other*" (§179, 111*). From this perspective, the individual seeking recognition needs to sublimate or dominate the other to become self-aware, or "certain of *itself* as the essential being" (§181, 111*). Conversely, in dominating the other the individual in a sense frees itself from constraints of the relation. In this case, we can say of the individual that "it receives back its own self" and, as a direct result, frees the other, or "lets the other again go free" (§181, 111).

The process of recognition concerns the interrelation of two people through "the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses" (§182, 112). Each party to the relation only becomes self-aware through its relation to the other, through which it relates to itself. Each is also aware that the other is self-aware. "They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another" (§184, 112). Yet recognition that an other is participating in the process of recognition is not recognition of that person.

Recognition through an interpersonal relation is a matter of degree. We have already noted that the relation between two individuals can take three main forms, the dominance of the master over the slave, that of the slave over the master—two cases in which there is a basic inequality between the two individuals—or mutual recognition, namely, a level of mutual equality that is only reached in acknowledgment by an independent person.

Hegel studies types of recognition occurring in a relation between unequals opposed to each other, including "one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*" (§185, 113). An individual is, to begin with, just itself, and only then, in a further stage, in relation to another individual. In this initial phase, each person is self-aware on the most

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minimal level that does not imply awareness of anyone else. To go beyond minimal self-awareness to full self-consciousness, a person must relate to an other on the same plane as itself, "when each is for the other as the other is for it" (§186, 113). This follows directly from the concept of recognition, since a person is only fully self-aware when recognition through the other attains the unrestricted form possible only between equals.

The first, abstract form of recognition consists in excluding anything else in order to be oneself. The political equivalent might be a purely unequal relation to the other. From a Hobbesian perspective, Hegel depicts this as a trial by death in which each affirms himself by risking his life in seeking the other's death with the aim of gaining recognition. Later in the book, in an account of legal status he studies the main modern form of institutional recognition. With feudal society in mind, he insists here on the importance of risking one's life to attain more than merely legal acknowledgment. In trial by death, each seeks the other's death at the cost of his own life. In this scenario, personal risk is essential. "The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a *person*, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness" (§187, 114). For legal recognition that merely accords status as a legal individual like everyone else is not yet the recognition of an individual as a particular person.

The initial approach to recognition is self-stultifying. For the struggle for recognition ending in death removes its own possibility that depends on an interpersonal relation. Although each person seeks recognition through the consciousness of the other, "death is the natural negation of consciousness, negation without permanence" (§188, 114*). In noting

that "life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness" (§189, 115), Hegel uncovers a deep truth. For to treat another as a thing is to deny oneself the fruits of a relation among equals.

The first form of this inequality, or trial by death, results in its dissolution through the death of one of the members. The second form of this inequality is initially more stable. Here one member is self-sufficient, living only for himself, and the other is dependent, living simply for another: "one is the self-sufficient consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is the *master*, the other is the *slave* " (§189, 115*).

Inverting the usual view that the slave depends on the master, Hegel brilliantly analyzes the relation of dominance as an inherently instable

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reliance of the master on the slave. He depicts this dependency as a triadic relation between the master, the slave, and a thing, or desired object. The master is mediated through "a consciousness to whose nature it belongs to be synthesized with subsistent being or thinghood in general" (§190, 115*). Hidden in this difficult description is the idea that the master is doubly related to the thing, as the object of desire, and to the person, or slave, for whom it is an object of desire.

Hegel simply assumes that the work of slaves concerns things, or physical objects. For Marx, this might be the products that a worker turns out, say, for the owner of a factory, who in turn sells them as commodities with a profit motive in mind. For Hegel, the master relates to the slave through the thing, and conversely to the thing through the slave. According to Hegel, who sounds like a Marxist, the slave depends on the substantial thing that is under the power of the master. Writing about the latter, Hegel remarks that "since he is the power over it [i.e., this being] and this being is the power over the other, it follows that he holds the other under himself" (§190, 115*). The relation of the master and the slave to the thing is unequal since the former in fact enjoys what to the latter is only a source of work.

Hegel now argues that, in this unequal relationship, the recognition the master receives from the slave is limited, hence inherently unsatisfactory. An individual subordinated to another is obliged to do the other's bidding, so that "the slave really only does the master's action" (§191, 116*). Since there is no reciprocity, this is a form of "recognition that is one-sided and unequal" (§191, 116). For Aristotle, the slave is a tool for its master. For Hegel, in a relation of inequality the weaker member functions as a mere object (*Gegenstand*) to be "manipulated" by the master to satisfy his own desires. Yet the fact that the slave functions merely as a thing makes it impossible for the master to be "certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself" (§192, 117).

Hegel now unveils the deeper structure of any relation of inequality. His point is that, like the preceding form, this form, indeed any form, of inequality, is instable. The dominant party only apparently dominates the weaker member, who will, in time, become dominant as the relationship evolves. "The *truth* of the substantial consciousness is accordingly the slavish consciousness of the slave" (§193, 117'). The master is not dominant but is instead dependent on the slave for recognition. Since trial by death is not a real possibility, the master cannot simply kill (*vernichten*) the slave. The master is other than he appears, and the slave will be transformed by the evolution of the relation into

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other than he was. Now sounding a revolutionary note, Hegel insists obscurely that the slave will lose his dependent status to become self-sufficient.

Hegel's insight into the social role of self-consciousness has been widely influential in movements of social liberation in our time. An obvious potential for social change is created when an individual in a merely subordinate social role becomes self-aware and, for that reason, is "transformed into a truly independent consciousness" (§193, 117). Hegel brings out this point by considering the inequality from the slave's angle of vision. He depicts it from the slave's side as relevantly similar to trial by death in saying that the slave "has the fear of death, of the absolute master" (§194, 117*). In principle, in virtue of the master's dependence on the slave, the latter is independent. His independence is realized through his service, or work. Yet we become aware of ourselves in and through what we do. "Through work [*Arbeit*], however, he comes to himself [*kommt es aber zu sich selbst*]" (§195, 181*). For through the act of making something, our capacities are externalized in what is made,

through what we can call objectification. As Marx will argue, so for Hegel work leads to self-consciousness that destabilizes rather than stabilizes unequal social relationships.

Hegel ends this passage with further comments on work that partially anticipate Marx's theory of alienation.²⁶ He emphasizes that, as a result of his formative activity (*Formieren*), the slave becomes someone who exists not only for another but on his own account, hence for himself. Marx's theory of alienation depends on an identity in externality between worker and product. In appropriating the product, the owner of the means of production literally appropriates the worker in the form of the product. In an important remark about the slave, which anticipates this theory, Hegel writes,

The shape does not become something other than himself through being made external to him; for it is precisely this shape that is his pure being-for-self, which in this externality is seen by him to be the truth. This occurs through his rediscovery of his intrinsic meaning [durch dies Wiederfinden seiner durch sich selbst eigner Sinn] precisely in his work, where it only appeared to have a foreign meaning [fremder Sinn]. (§196, 118-119*)

According to Hegel, both service and fear are necessary for the disadvantaged party to liberate himself, since it is only in the production of a thing that a person becomes self-conscious. Further distinguishing absolute fear (*absolute Furcht*) and a little anxiety (*einige Angst*), in an-

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tipication of Søren Kierkegaard and then Martin Heidegger, he maintains that only through absolute risk, in effect what Karl Jaspers calls a limit situation, does one come to know oneself. Now looking ahead to the next section, he implies that mere stoical detachment is not freedom in the full sense of the term. For unless one has been threatened in the deepest manner one cannot really be free. This point counts against Sartre's well-known, romantic, clearly stoical view of freedom.²⁷

B. Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness

The reason for devoting so much space to this brilliant passage is quite simply its immense importance: within Hegel's exposition, in Marx and Marxism, above all for the understanding of modern society. Hegel reminds us that the intellectual freedom needed for knowledge and provided by self-certainty, or self-consciousness, is not a simple given; nor is it reached, as Descartes and Sartre hold, through mere introspection. Like Descartes, in his theory of prethetic consciousness Sartre maintains that it is always possible for a cognitive subject, conscious of other things, or things other than itself, to take itself as its object, hence to become self-conscious.²⁸ For Hegel, on the contrary, self-consciousness, or self-certainty, can only emerge through social conflict, which is missing in Sartre's more abstract account.

The master-slave relation is depicted as a struggle between two persons locked in an unequal relationship. It is easy to grasp modern society in terms of this metaphor. This analysis leaves unresolved the crucial issue of an alternative form of society in which the relations between individuals would be even approximately equal. Yet later on in the *Phenomenology* (e.g., §349) and in the *Encyclopedia*,²⁹ he at least imagines a relation of full equality, or mutual recognition, which is a necessary condition of full self-consciousness. Certainly, various forms of political theory, most recently in feminist social theory, presuppose the real possibility of a society in which social inequality is reduced or even abolished.

Hegel, who has considered only that form of self-certainty arising within a relation of inequality, further studies three related attitudes. Each represents an approach to the subject as self-conscious. Stoicism and skepticism are well known in the history of philosophy. Unhappy consciousness (*das unglückliche Bewusstsein*) is illustrated in a form of

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Christianity that Kierkegaard emphasized after Hegel's death as part of the anti-Hegelian reaction. Hegel sees these three views as illustrating ways for the individual, aware of himself, to understand his relation to the surrounding world.

Hegel begins by taking stock of the results of the master-slave analysis. Through social interaction, the subject that was initially wholly abstract has reached awareness of itself as "a being that *thinks* or is a free self-consciousness" (§197, 120). These two aspects, which represent the person as passive, or theoretical, and active, or practical, are successive phases of the freedom of self-consciousness. This new stage, where thought (*Denken*) begins,

features a person who *thinks* or is a free self-consciousness" (§197, 120), namely, a person who, for the first time, is self-aware, hence capable of knowledge.

Hegel further introduces a distinction between deficient and full forms of thought, or mere representation (*Vorstellung*), typical of religion, and deficient forms of philosophy, such as Kant's critical philosophy, on the one hand, and thought, on the other. Thought, which is conceptual, unifies the concept of the thing and the thing of the concept, the theory and its object. Later in the book, in the chapter on religion, there is a long polemic against a representational approach to knowledge. The discussion is limited here to emphasizing the basic distinction between representational and conceptual thought. Unlike representation that vainly seeks to grasp an external object, thought cognizes what is within, hence immanent to, consciousness.

What is represented, what immediately is, the being as such [das Vorgestellte, Gestaltete, Seiende als solches] has the form of being something other than consciousness; but a Concept [Begriff] is a being, and this difference, insofar as it is in it, is its limited content. What is represented, what immediately is, and this distinction, insofar as it is present in consciousness itself, is its determinate content; but since this content is at the same time a content grasped in thought, consciousness remains immediately conscious of its unity with this determinate and distinct being. (§197, 120*)

Beginning with stoicism, free consciousness appears in different forms within human culture, the history of spirit, or the record of human attempts to cognize the world and ourselves. Hegel, who discusses stoicism and skepticism in detail in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, knew both theories well.

In the space of a few words, he reveals detailed knowledge of stoicism. Its principle is that the individual thinks, and only differences

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within thought, not within external reality, are significant. In a concealed reference to Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and philosopher, and to Epictetus, a Roman slave who became a philosopher, he says that "whether on the throne or in chains . . . its [i.e., the Stoic's] aim is to be free, and to maintain that lifeless indifference which steadfastly withdraws from the bustle of existence" (§199, 121). The stoic indifference to existence to which the passage alludes is linked with a concern for the benevolence and orderliness of the universe intended to lead to spiritual peace (*apatheia*) or well-being (*euthymia*).

Hegel, who maintains that forms of thought are related to the historical moment in which they appear, now notes that stoicism could only appear "in a time of universal fear and servitude, in which culture had risen to thought" (§199, 121*), parenthetically like the unequal relation of the slave to the master. The stoic, who is "indifferent to natural existence" (§200, 122), is free in thought only. Such a theory is unable to furnish criteria for truth or goodness other than "*contentless* thought" (§200, 122). Since it has no content beyond the level of thought, abstract stoic freedom is not real social freedom. Stoicism that abstracts from the world offers only an abstract conception of freedom realized in skepticism as "the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is" (§202, 123).

Stoicism presents a concept of independent consciousness within the relation of social inequality that skepticism realizes and experiences. "Skepticism is the realization of that of which Stoicism is only the Concept—and the actual experience of the freedom of thought" (§202, 123*). In an early article on skepticism, Hegel depicts as its principle the principle of contradiction according to which for every argument there is an equal counterargument.³⁰ Here he describes skepticism as a basically negative movement, which is illustrated in such forms of consciousness as the overcoming of objective reality as well as its relation to that reality.

In comparison to the master-slave relation, stoicism corresponds to the abstract idea of freedom as an independent consciousness, whereas skepticism corresponds to its realization through the slave. Skepticism, like the dialectical movement of consciousness, is abstract thinking, without content, which relates "in an only external way to subsistent being, that is its content" (§203, 124*). Skepticism exerts its freedom in negating otherness, or what concretely exists, so that "what vanishes is the determinate [das Bestimmte]" (§204, 124*). It is the negation of "all singularity and all difference" (§205, 125). Yet it is beset by in-

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ternal contradiction in its attention to the inessential, in its opposition of change to permanence and of permanence to change that is insight-fully compared to the squabbling of children.

The attention to stoicism and skepticism seem surprising. One might expect discussion of other, more important philosophical theories. Stoicism, which has no important modern representatives, was not a serious contender when Hegel wrote. Yet skepticism was strongly present in Hegel's period: in Hume, who famously awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber; in Gottlob Ernst Schulze (pseudonym Aenesidemus), a minor anti-Kantian, whose views Hegel considered in his early article on skepticism; and in Maimon, whom Kant regarded as his most penetrating contemporary critic. Hegel apparently regards stoicism and skepticism as illustrating the least and next least forms of human freedom, or free self-consciousness. This in turn justifies their treatment in some detail in an account of the historical rise of self-consciousness in human culture.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Hegel's treatment of stoicism and skepticism is his attention to the link between forms of thought and specific historical circumstances. Philosophers who understand their discipline as concerned with truth that appears in, but is unlimited by, time are anticontextualists. Philosophical contextualists consider truth not only to appear in but also to be limited by time. As a contextualist, Hegel regards thought as intrinsically historical. Marxists hold that what they call bourgeois society "causes" ideologically distorted views tending to maintain socially distorted forms of society. In linking stoicism to a particular historical moment, Hegel is not suggesting, as Marxists sometimes maintain, that our views are "caused" by it in any simple sense. He rather suggests that types of theory are made possible, even helped to emerge as it were, by specific historical circumstances.

Hegel accords twice as much space to a form of religion than to the two philosophical theories canvassed here. This may now seem surprising since, at least in English-language philosophy, the divorce between philosophy and religion is nearly complete. A main thrust of the **Enlightenment** tradition, whose force is far from spent, lies in the concerted attempt to isolate reason from faith of any kind. Many subscribe to Heidegger's view that atheism is a precondition for philosophy.³¹ Yet the attention to religion is hardly surprising, given Hegel's conviction that philosophy and religion consider the same object through radically different forms of thought.

This section is mainly devoted to exposition of a specifically religious

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attitude toward freedom. Skepticism is described as self-contradictory, since it affirms what it also denies. What Hegel calls the unhappy consciousness progresses beyond skepticism. For the two attitudes that skepticism separates are internalized in a form of Christianity in which the individual is divided against himself. This division, which exhibits the dominance of the immutable over the mutable, of the infinite God over finite human being, is a further form of the master-slave relation. The unhappy consciousness exhibits cognitive dissonance, since the subject is simultaneously committed to conflicting theses.

Hegel's attitude toward religion is complex. Although he was a practicing Lutheran, it will become clear in the chapter on religion that his theory of knowledge is independent of any commitment to Christianity or even to organized religion. Here he presents an essentially negative depiction of a type of Christian belief, illustrated by Kierkegaard, later to become his opponent.³² Unhappy consciousness illustrates Hegel's belief that religion, which prefers faith to philosophical reason, fails to think through the problem of knowledge. Unhappy consciousness, in which the individual defines himself through his subordination to God, repeats the same structure as the slave's relation to the master, hence evoking Hegel's opprobrium.

Stoicism and skepticism were studied as forms of realization of human freedom. The unhappy consciousness falls below the level of freedom attained in such types of philosophy. In the way he turns toward God, the individual depicted as an unhappy consciousness renounces his independence. As is later noted (see §344), by reverting from self-consciousness to consciousness, by entering voluntarily into a relation of slave to master, such a person makes himself into a thing. Hegel's negative evaluation explains the relative ferocity of his mordant description of this form of Christianity here and elsewhere in the book. It further explains, despite his resistance to anti-Semitism,³³ his consistently negative depiction of Judaism here and elsewhere. Judaism appears to him as the subjection of a people to inflexible rules with the same or a similar result. This negative view of Judaism as a religion was widely shared at the time. Kant deplored the inability to bring the Jews to the

true religion.³⁴ Fichte considered it appropriate that, since Jews do not believe in Jesus Christ, they be deprived of civil rights.³⁵

Since it is internally contradictory, skepticism cannot be maintained. It leads to a new attitude combining within the individual's awareness the two moments that skepticism isolates. If stoicism represents the abstract attitude of the master and skepticism affirms the master against

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the slave, then the new attitude illustrates both perspectives within a single consciousness. Thinking of the way that certain forms of Christianity affirm the utter nothingness of the individual in the sight of God, Hegel says that "the *Unhappy Consciousness* is the consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being" (§296, 126).

The skeptical dualism between the subject and the world is taken up within consciousness in the "*unhappy consciousness, divided in itself*" (§207, 126*). Its true return (*Rückkehr*), or reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) with itself, can only occur through spirit, which will be described in the chapter on that topic. Now depicting religious devotion as an unthinking relation of human beings to God, Hegel writes that "the Unhappy Consciousness itself is the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, and itself is both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. But it is not as yet explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both" (§207, 126).

There is, to begin with, an immediate unity, within the individual's consciousness, in which the finite, or "changeable," individual takes himself to be inessential with respect to the "unchangeable" that he accepts as his essence. The religious individual, aware of his finitude, is unconsciously also the infinite being to which he is devoted, "in such a way that again it does not *itself* take the essence to be its own" (§208, 127). The discussion anticipates both Kierkegaard and Feuerbach. In an anticipation of Kierkegaard, Hegel describes the effort of the individual, who struggles to lose himself and who agonizes over his life, activity, and essential nothingness. In noting that the religious individual's effort to transcend himself in God is "itself this same consciousness" (§209, 127), he anticipates Feuerbach's "unmasking" of religion as essentially a human phenomenon³⁶

The finite individual's awareness of himself and awareness of the infinite God are contained within his divided consciousness, whose truth "is just the *unified being [Einssein]* of this dual consciousness" (§210, 128*). This relation within a consciousness divided against itself occurs in three easily recognizable ways, which correspond to the three persons of the Christian trinity: as the immutable (or God the father), as individuality belonging to the immutable (or the Son), and as the divided self that finds itself in the immutable (or the Holy Ghost). For Hegel, Judaism fails to achieve this truth that requires the unification within the individual's consciousness of the individual with God.

The first form is one in which difference predominates. In respect to the God of the Old Testament, the religious individual here knows

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God "only as the *alien [das Fremde]* who condemns the individual" (§210, 128*). Passing judgment on Judaism, Hegel depicts the unhappy consciousness as "in its unhappiness [in seinem Unglücke]" (§211, 128*) (but not "in its wretchedness" as Miller incorrectly translates). Hegel's point is that this religion contains an unresolved "contradiction [Gegensatz]" (§211, 128*). Since the division within consciousness cannot be overcome, the hope of the religious individual to unite with God "must remain a hope, that is, without fulfillment or contemporaneity [Gegenwart]" (§212, 129*).

Christianity surpasses Judaism, which cannot unite the individual with an unembodied God (*ungestalteten Unwandelbaren*), in its own efforts to enter into relation with God as embodied (*gestalteten Unwandelbaren*). The essence of this form of religion is "the unified being of the particular individual with the Unchangeable" (§213, 129*). With the Christian trinity in mind, Hegel says that this union can occur in three ways. Yet to the extent that union between man and God is possible at all, it is possible only in the third form, or spirit understood as "consciousness that is aware of its own being-for-self" (§214, 130).

The initial form is a relation of "pure consciousness" where God only seems to be present since He has not yet "developed [entstanden]" (§215, 130*). The individual, who has here surpassed stoicism and skepticism in holding together in consciousness pure thought and individuality, is still not aware of the identity between God and himself.

The first, devotional, form of Christianity does not yet exhibit thought. Hegel, who can be very harsh, depicts the desire for immediate union between the individual, described as "a pure heart," and God as an infinite yearning, whose "thinking as such is no more than the chaotic jingling of bells, or a mist of warm incense, a musical thinking that does not get as far as the Concept" (§217, 131*). Hegel will argue later in the book that the cognitive aims of religion can be fulfilled only in philosophy. Here he claims that the subject of religious devotion "feels" but does not know, since knowledge requires concepts. Elsewhere, he is severely critical of the medieval church and Roman Catholicism in general, for instance in a remark on transubstantiation that "the host is venerated even as an outward thing so that if it has been eaten by a mouse, both the mouse and its excrement are to be venerated."[37](#)

Unhappy consciousness exists in three ways, to begin with as an individual. Second, it exists as a person who "finds itself only as desiring and working" but who (since it feels rather than thinks) fails to become

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"certain of itself" (§218,132). A person with an unhappy, divided consciousness confronts an "*actuality broken in two*" that is both a mere nothingness and "sanctified" (§219, 133). Such an individual, who could affirm himself if actuality were a mere nothingness, cannot do so in the face of an actuality that has "the form of the Unchangeable" (§220, 133). He finds himself in "a relationship of two extremes" (§221, 133) lacking any effective mediation. At most, the person, who surrenders himself to the divine, becomes aware of himself in what he does as "*individuality being for itself in general [der fürsichseienden Einzelheit überhaupt]*" (§222, 135*).

Third, there is the person who has proven his self-sufficiency "through his will and its realization [Vollbringen]" (§223, 135*). This is the lesson of the slave's confrontation with the actual world. Despite a religious attitude of self-abnegation, the individual becomes aware of himself "in work and enjoyment" (§223, 135).

If actuality is a mere nothingness, then, as Hegel penetratingly says about the individual, "his actual doing thus becomes a doing of nothing, his enjoyment a feeling of its unhappiness" (§225, 135*). Calling us back to reality, he remarks that "consciousness is aware of itself as *this actual individual* in its animal functions" (§225, 135*). In a sharply critical remark, he notes that the turn away from actuality is conjoined with a turn toward God, since "the immediate destruction of its actual being is *mediated* through the thought of the Unchangeable" (§226, 136*).

This relation between the individual and God, which is compared to a syllogism (*Schlu b*), is mediated by a third term, or mediator, which is "itself a conscious Being" (§227, 136). Hegel sharply criticizes the religious mediator, apparently the Roman Catholic priest, to whom the individual, who forsakes his "action and enjoyment," forfeits his "will," "freedom of decision [Entschlusses]" and "responsibility for his own action" (§228, 136*). In this surrender of oneself, the individual "truly and completely deprives itself of the consciousness of inner and outer freedom, of the actuality in which consciousness exists for *itself*" (§229, 137). Yet the individual also finds himself in this way. In the completed sacrifice, he throws off his unhappiness. For since intentions, like the language in which they are expressed, are intrinsically universal, in what it does the individual realizes itself as "the representation of reason, the certainty of consciousness, absolute in itself in its individuality, or the being of all reality" (§230, 138).

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Chapter 5 "Reason"

We come now, still early in the book, after the examination of consciousness and self-consciousness, to its third and last main division. Hegel's theory turns on his view of reason. He devotes more than two-thirds of his great treatise (no less than 568 of a total of 808

paragraphs) to its examination. It is worth belaboring the obvious, lest it be simply overlooked, that not only "The Certainty and Truth of Reason" but also "Spirit," "Religion," and finally "Absolute Knowing," the specifically philosophical form of cognition, all belong to this general topic.

Hegel obviously attaches great importance to his exposition of reason. "The Certainty and Truth of Reason" is nearly as long as "Spirit," the longest chapter in the book. Following Descartes's distinction between views of the subject as either a spectator or an actor, Kant distinguishes between the basically passive theoretical subject and the basically active moral subject. Hegel divides his chapter into three main parts. He initially studies the subject as a passive spectator, or mere observer. In the second and third parts, he studies the rational subject as theoretically active as concerns knowledge and then as practically active in the world.

Hegel has already engaged Kant's theory earlier in the book in the examination of the cognitive instrument and the medium of knowledge in the introduction, in the dualistic account of the cognitive object in "Force and Understanding," and so on. In "Reason," he studies the theme that Kant presents in his three great treatises—*Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Critique of Judgment*.

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Hegel's reaction to Kant, particularly the Kantian view of reason, offers important clues to his own view. In the *Differenzschrift*, he sketches a theory of reflection (*Reflexion*) as reason that in the *Phenomenology* becomes his view of spirit. In the introduction to the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*, he complains that Kant deprives reason of any constitutive role in knowledge, restricting it merely to a regulative function.¹ In the *Encyclopedia*, he records his appreciation for Kant's distinction between understanding and reason, which, since it limits cognition to concrete experience, offers an unjustly limited, abstract view of reason. Here is the passage.

Kant was the first to emphasize the distinction between understanding and reason in a definite way, establishing the finite and conditioned as the subject matter of the former, and the infinite and unconditioned as that of the latter. It must be recognized that to have established the finitude of the cognition that is based merely on experience and belongs to the understanding, and to have termed its content "appearance," was a very important result of the Kantian philosophy. But we ought not to stop at this negative result, or to reduce the unconditioned character of reason to the merely abstract identity that excludes distinction. Since, upon this view, reason is regarded as simply going beyond the finite and conditioned character of the understanding, it is thereby itself degraded into something finite and conditioned, for the genuine infinite is not merely a realm beyond the finite: on the contrary, it contains the finite sublated within itself.²

Hegel's reading of Kant in the *Differenzschrift* is frequently repeated, deepened, but never basically altered in his later writings. The chapter on reason in the *Phenomenology* contains a lengthy exposition of three forms of reason. In the introductory section, Hegel concentrates on two interrelated themes. To begin with, he insists briefly on the results of the previous discussion leading up to the discovery of self-certainty, or intellectual freedom, in the analysis of culture. He follows this through a complex meditation on "idealism." This theme, in suspension since it was broached incidentally toward the end of "Consciousness," becomes central here. The meditation on "idealism" expands an underlying theme throughout the book that has not so far been directly addressed. For in becoming self-aware, the subject understands the idealist thesis that we know only ourselves.

In "The Certainty and Truth of Reason," the epistemological problem is no longer how to become conscious of an independent object, an approach to knowledge that was seen to fail in the chapter on consciousness. It is rather how to know what is present in consciousness. In this respect, Hegel argues two points. He begins with the insight that

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self-consciousness occurs in a sociohistorical context that is the framework for our awareness of anything other than ourselves. This leads to the further insight that a person develops as an individual through what Hegel calls the negative of oneself, or the objective manifestation of what one is as what one does.

Hegel notes the link between self-certainty and cognition in the very first sentence of the chapter in writing "In grasping the thought that the *single* individual consciousness is *in itself* Absolute Essence, consciousness has returned into itself" (§231, 139). The term "absolute essence" refers here to the free self-consciousness, or the subject certain of itself, which is the result of the chapter on self-consciousness. Christianity, more precisely the unhappy consciousness that yearns to know the infinite God, illustrates the general problem of how a

finite person can reach unlimited knowledge. In again comparing this relation to a syllogism, he repeats his suggestion that the extremes represented by the finite individual and the infinite deity can only be united in a middle term, or consciousness of the unity and of itself. "This middle term is the unity immediately knowing and relating both, and the consciousness of their unity, which it proclaims to consciousness and thereby *to itself*, the certainty of being all truth" (§231, 139*).

In "Self-Consciousness," Hegel argued that the real human subject only becomes aware of himself in the social context. In "Reason," he studies the individual, who desires to extend his knowledge beyond the scope of immediate self-knowledge. His analysis presupposes a version of the Kantian thesis that we know what we produce, which Hegel restates as the view that the world is nothing other than the subject. Building on the model of the slave who objectifies himself in what he does, Hegel says that the rational individual is "certain that it is itself reality [Realität], or that all actuality [Wirklichkeit] is none other than itself" (§232, 139*).

This theoretical claim is meaningful, not when it is merely asserted, but only when it is carried out. For "self-consciousness is not only for itself but also in itself all reality first thereby that it becomes this reality or rather proves itself as such" (§233, 140*). Mere certainty of that truth is not yet that truth that remains to be demonstrated in practice. For it is only when "reason arises as *reflection* from this opposite [that] it presents itself not merely as a certainty and an assurance, but as truth" (§234, 141*).

Knowledge that requires identity also requires difference, or the difference between the knower and the known, which in Kant is provided

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by an external affection (*Affizieren*) and in Fichte by an external impulse (*Anstoss*). In knowing what is the same, or itself, the subject also knows what is not the same, what is different from itself. For "this category or *simple* unity of self-consciousness and being possesses difference in *itself*; for its essence is just this, to be immediately one and selfsame in *otherness*, or in absolute difference" (§235, 142).

The insistence on real difference rebuts criticism by G. E. Moore³ and others who object that idealism in general, particularly Hegel's view, somehow overlooks the reality of the external world. Hegel's conviction that reason arises only for a subject certain of itself follows Kant's famous "Refutation of Idealism." Like Kant, he in effect holds that there is no inner experience without an outer something that affects the subject.⁴

Difference that occurs within the unity of reason no longer belongs to anything like an external object that, accordingly, disappears. In its place, Hegel offers a conception of individuality (*Einzelheit*), understood as "the transition of the category from its concept to an *external reality*" (§236, 143*). He understands individuality along the lines of the Kantian schemata,⁵ another such conceptual bridge, in a way that preserves difference while asserting unity. Unity follows from the idealist claim for the identity of subject and object, knower and known. Difference, which is due to the difference within consciousness between the subject and what it knows, is overcome on the level of reason. For the rational, conscious subject appropriates what differs from it through rational categories, hence demonstrating the idealist thesis by making the object its own.

Consciousness, however, in its essence [als Wesen] is this whole process itself, of passing out of itself as simple category into a singular individual, into the object, and of contemplating this process in the object, nullifying the object as distinct, appropriating it as differentiated [als einen unterschiednen] as its own, and proclaiming itself as this certainty of being all reality, of being both itself and its object. (§237, 144*)

Hegel finally anticipates his discussion of reason in a parting glance at Kant's and Fichte's subjective idealism. Subjective idealism, which is wholly contained within consciousness, cannot account for the unity between the subject that knows and the object that is known. It is, hence, unable to transcend the moments of meaning and perceiving surveyed in "Consciousness." Referring to subjective idealism, Hegel writes,

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It is involved in a direct contradiction; it asserts the essence to be a duality of opposed factors, the unity of apperception and equally a Thing; whether the Thing is called an external impulse, or an empirical or sensuous unity, or the Thing-in-itself, it still remains in principle the same, i.e., external to that unity. (§238, 145*)

Hegel consistently approaches the epistemological problem through his diagnosis of the Cartesian difficulty of progressing from certainty to truth. In remaining within consciousness, subjective idealism is unable to make the transition from subject to object, from a view of the thing to the thing in view. This unresolved dualism is surpassed in practice through objective

idealism that, aware that a merely certain concept is not yet truth, is driven beyond itself to truth. When we step back from the abstract claims that whatever occurs in my consciousness is true, we become aware that, to reach truth, we need to transcend mere mineness "to give filling to the empty 'mine'" (§239, 145).

A. Observing Reason

On the level of observation, reason again traverses the terrain of sense-certainty and perception, this time from the perspective of human being. If to know is to grasp the cognitive object through reason, then the subject must "find" itself in its object. It does so through concepts that transform what is given in sensory experience into ideas that capture its essence.

The exposition begins with description that picks out essential properties, then turns to explanation that formulates scientific laws, or hypotheses explaining what is given in experience. Laws describe the inorganic sphere, but not the organic sphere, where we need to appeal to ends, that is, to purpose, or immanent teleology. Since reason cannot find laws for organic nature, it turns inward toward the self. For Hegel, the logical laws of thought, the contemporary form of psychologistic logic, represent form without matter. He turns next to empirical psychology, in short, everything concerning the empirical study of the soul. He then considers physiognomy and phrenology, two contemporary pseudosciences, before finally going on to consider practical life in society.

The examination of reason begins through study of the spectator view of the cognitive subject, in Descartes's words "with man because

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he is the spectator of all."⁶ Descartes analyzes knowledge through a conception of the subject as passive that merely observes what is. Hegel rejects this view in favor of a conception of the subject that knows what is in itself, or rational, and looks for reason, or itself, in otherness. The Hegelian subject "seeks its 'other', knowing that therein it possesses nothing else but itself: it seeks only its own infinitude" (§240, 146). Reason seeks itself everywhere in the world. The fulfillment of this enterprise demands the fulfillment of reason itself in the chapters on spirit and absolute knowing. The chapter on reason treats its less developed forms.

Observation, the first and least developed form of reason, is initially abstract, "only dimly aware of its presence in the actual world" (§341, 146). It presupposes an opposition between the observer, or pure subject that passively records what is given, and the object as a pure given. As in "Sense-Certainty," Hegel again refuses the idea of immediate knowledge on the grounds that knowledge is always mediate, or mediated by the cognitive subject. The idea that we truly apprehend the way things are as opposed to the way they appear is a mere fiction. For intellectual apprehension "transforms thought into the form of being, or being into the form of thought" (§242, 147). Yet in coming to know what things are through observation, we come also to know "what consciousness is *in itself*" (§242, 147*).

The exposition of observational reason is only the initial phase of a long investigation leading to the result that "what consciousness is *in itself* will become *explicit* for it" (§242, 147). This investigation will end only when in the chapter on spirit we comprehend that the real subject, or human being, is spirit. The lengthy section "Observing Reason" offers detailed study of nature, then of spirit, then of their relation.

The interest of this section is heightened by the disputed question of Hegel's grasp of natural science. His unusually severe criticism of Newton, which cannot merely be explained away, is sometimes seen as following from an insufficient background in natural science. Alone among the great German idealists, Fichte, who typically insisted on the scientific status of philosophy in the various versions of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, had virtually no knowledge of natural science. Schelling wrote extensively on this topic.⁷ Although not as directly versed in the science of the day as Kant,⁸ who made important contributions to cosmology, Hegel knew a good deal about natural science,⁹ enough so that some of his closest students regard his theory of nature as still one of the most important aspects of his theory.¹⁰ His grasp of contemporary

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science and pseudoscience is apparent in remarks on natural science, psychology, and the pseudosciences of physiognomy and phrenology.

a. Observation of Nature

Since much of the factual material on which Hegel relied in composing this section is dated and his remarks on it often seem strained, we can go quickly. In fairness to Hegel, we should note that when he was writing, the effort to provide a scientific classification of the plant and animal world, to which much is owed to Linnaeus (Carl von Linné, 1707-1778), was very recent.

He notes, to begin with, that a cognitive approach dependent on observation and experience overlooks two essential points. On the one hand, the subject shapes what it observes or experiences. In siding with Kant against the British empiricists, followers of Locke, Hegel rejects the general effort to base a theory of knowledge on a pure given that, if Hegel is correct, is never experienced. For perception is always "of a *universal*, not of a *sensuous particular*" (§244, 147). On the other hand, experience can yield knowledge only if what is given in experience is not a sensuous this, as in sense-certainty, but a universal. By "universal" he means in the first instance mere identity, or "only what remains *identical with itself*" (§245, 147). Observation isolates one or more universals instantiated in a single object. Although there is no end of observations to be made, what we find is "merely the bounds of Nature and of its own activity" (§245, 148).

For Hegel, there are natural dividing lines within the world as experienced. Observation picks out what stands out as saliences in nature. This claim is startling from someone who in effect holds that what we see depends on the perspective we adopt. There is a further difficulty in grasping the natural saliences to which he is committed. Hegel adopts a pre-Darwinian perspective, opposed to evolution.¹¹ *Differentiae* are supposed, not merely to have an essential connection with cognition, but also to accord with the essential characteristics of things, and our artificial system is supposed to accord with Nature's own system and to express only this" (§246, 149). Since he has no sense of natural variation, he is at a loss to explain the origin of such species-specific distinctions as claws or teeth. He maintains that approaches that regard the objects as invariant are confuted "by instances which rob it of every determination, invalidate the universality to which it had risen, and reduce it to an observation and description which is devoid of thought" (§247, 150). But this difficulty occurs in any conceptual scheme.

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Moving on to a higher form of classification, he returns to the very idea of law that he has previously criticized in Newtonian mechanics. He points out that "law and the concept of the determinateness" (§248, 151*), whose truth is experientially illustrated, describe the behavior of observable phenomena. In a famous remark in the *Philosophy of Right*, he later asserts that the rational is the actual, and conversely.¹² Anticipating this passage, he optimistically asserts that in nature what is is as it should be: "What is universally valid is also universally in force [geltend]; what *ought* to be, in fact also is" (§249, 151*).

His difficulty in integrating modern science into his philosophy is apparent in a remark about Galileo's law of falling bodies. He depicts this law as following by analogy, today we would say through induction, from the observation of many cases. The limitation of this approach lies in the fact that in each observation we deal only with a single instance, "for universality is present only as a *simple immediate* universality" (§250, 152). But the reasonable alternative is unclear.

Hegel attributes an exaggerated role to induction, the basis of Johannes Kepler's laws, in the rise of the new science. Galileo, Newton, and others did not found classical mechanics through induction at all. It is more likely that the rise of the new science was due to the imaginative reconstruction of an ideal.¹³ Hegel obscurely claims that we need to "find the *pure conditions of the law*" (§251, 153). To do this, we convert it into a concept through freeing it from specific things. Matter, he says, is "being in the form of a *universal*, or in the form of a Concept" (§252, 134*). And the result of the experimental subject, its own object, is "pure law" (§253, 154) that is independent of sensuous being.

After these preliminary remarks, Hegel turns to the difference between organic and inorganic nature. His convoluted argument would have been more convincing had it been shorter and simpler. He depicts an organism as instable, as "this absolute fluidity in which the

determinateness, through which it would be only *for an other*, is dissolved" (§254, 154). In organic being, the different properties are related within "the organic simple unity" (§254, 154). Apparently thinking of Montesquieu, who correlates law with climate,¹⁴ he notes that general laws, such as the correlation of "thick, hairy pelts" with "Northern latitudes," lack explanatory power, since they fail "to do justice to the manifold diversity of organic nature" (§255, 155*).

Kant invokes purpose as a merely regulative idea that, although not constitutive of nature, enables us to study it.¹⁵ On the contrary, for Hegel organism must be understood through an intrinsic end (*Zweck*), or internal teleology, or again a drive for self-preservation that is con-

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stitutive of its being. Even if the end is not expressed, the organism "contains it" (§256, 156*). Like such later vitalists as Henri Bergson,¹⁶ he attributes purpose directly to organic nature. "The notion of End, then, to which Reason in its role of observer rises, is a Concept of which it is aware; but it is also no less present as something actual, and it is not an external relation of the latter, but its essence" (§257, 156*). The end immanent to the organism is known through reason that "finds only Reason itself" (§258, 137). Conversely, the organism "preserves itself" (§259, 138) through the immanent end. Hegel rejects the idea of biological law in observing that self-preservation is "lawless [*gesetzlos*]" (§260, 159*).

Hegel did not anticipate the sophistication of modern biology and related fields. He contends that observation can know inorganic phenomena, but it cannot know organic phenomena whose "inner movement . . . can only be grasped as Concept" (§261, 159*). The dualistic approach to organism typically relates what is given in observation and what is imputed in thought as the invisible end through a law "that *the outer is the expression of the inner*" (§262, 160). This law posits that the inner and the outer are linked through "the organic essence [*Wesen*]" (§263, 160*).

Hegel floridly describes the inner as "the *simple, unitary* soul, the pure *Concept of End* or the universal, which in its partition equally remains a universal fluidity" (§265, 160). Its most basic organic properties are sensibility, irritability, and reproduction that directly derive "from the concept of 'end-in-itself'" (§266, 161*). Such properties manifest themselves outwardly as "shape" and inwardly as "organic systems" (§267, 161), or again as "*part* of the organic structure" and as "*universal fluid* determinateness which pervades all those systems" (§268, 161). We can observe either the outer or the inner functioning of the organism through laws, but not the relation between the inner and the outer through a third kind of law. Such laws cannot be formulated, since "the conception of laws of this kind proves to have no truth" (§269, 162).

For Hegel, who holds that laws can only be invoked to describe things that do not change, we cannot use laws in the realm of biological phenomena. His language is typically complex, but the point is simple enough.

We found that a law existed when the relation was such that the universal organic property in an organic system had made itself into a Thing, and in this Thing had a structured copy [*gestalteten Abdruck*] of itself, so that both were the same essence, present in the one case as a universal moment, and in the other, as a Thing. (§270, 162*)

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Hegel now enumerates a number of difficulties that prevent the formulation of biological laws. To begin with, there are the qualitative distinctions between concepts that are instantiated as quantitative distinctions. This leads to merely formal laws that increasingly lose sight of content. Reproduction, which is unlike sensibility and irritability, cannot be related to such laws. Another difficulty is that laws are formulated conceptually, hence in a priori fashion, but the differences in question are derived from observation. Yet to take the fundamental properties as merely observational in character means that they lose their biological specificity, and "sink to the level of common properties" (§725, 165).

Observation only reaches the basic properties of organism in the form of externality that fails to grasp the dynamic aspect proper to life. Yet when living processes become anatomy, "the moments have really ceased *to be*, for they cease to be processes" (§276, 166). Since on the basis of the fundamental biological properties "a law of being" (§277, 166) cannot be formulated, Hegel rejects the very possibility of biological laws. "In this way the formulation [*Vorstellung*] of a *law* in the case of organic being is altogether lost" (§278, 167*).

As concerns biological phenomena, we possess general conceptions that cannot be confirmed. For there are no fixed objects, or "such *inert* aspects as are required for the law"

(§279, 168). The link in question is inaccessible to observation, since the organism "displays its essential determinateness only as the *flux* [*Wechsel*] of existent determinateness" (§280, 168*). Now sounding like Bergson, for whom the intellect distorts,¹⁷ he says that the perceptual object has the "character of a fixed determinateness" (§281, 169). To say, for instance, that "'an animal with strong muscles' " is " 'an animal organism of high sensibility' " is to translate "sensuous facts into Latin, and a bad Latin at that, instead of into the Concept" (§282, 169*). Similarly, quantity, which is measured by number, cannot be equated with quality.

Hegel now considers "the *outer* aspect of organic being" (§283, 170). This is, to begin with, "*structured shape*" (§284, 170) that mediates between other things, or inorganic nature, and the organic nature it manifests, in respect to which "it is *for itself* and reflected into itself" (§285, 170). The inner and the outer are incommensurable since "number" fails to connect with organic life, "the living elements of instincts, manner of life, and other aspects of sensuous existence" (§286, 172). For the mere "shape" is not "organic being" (§286, 172). Perhaps misusing a scientific concept to mean "essence," he maintains that the "inner aspect of shape as the simple singularity of an inorganic thing is

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specific gravity" (§288, 172), which, since it is undifferentiated, "does not have difference *within itself*" (§289, 173). The other aspect of the inorganic is "ordinary cohesion" (§290, 173). that is measured by number.

There is a basic dissimilarity between inorganic and organic entities. Unlike an inorganic thing, a biological being contains within itself its own principle, or its "true universality" that is "an *inner essence*" (§292, 177). Again invoking the idea of a syllogism, Hegel describes organic being as the middle term between the extremes of "*universal life*," or the "genus," and "the *single individual*" (§293, 177). He remarks obscurely that genus "divides itself into species on the basis of the *general determinateness* of number" (§294, 178). Rational observation relates to life on a general level that has no rational principle of order. For "*life in general* . . . in its differentiating process does not actually possess any rational ordering and arrangement of parts" (§295, 178). This claim apparently conflicts with what is now believed about the biological basis of reproduction. Rational observation can make no more than very general claims about "universal life as such," or "the form of systems distinguished quite generally" (§296, 179). Consistent with his view that language refers generally but cannot name the single thing, Hegel remarks that "observing Reason only has in mind the thing as its *meaning* [*das Meinen*]" (§297, 179*).

b. Observation of Self-Consciousness in its Purity and in its Relation to External Actuality: Logical and Psychological Laws

Hegel restricts biological explanation to mere surface observation. He does not, for instance, consider the complex, homeostatic nature of organisms studied in contemporary biology. Yet his contention that psychological phenomena cannot be explained through physical laws remains surprisingly contemporary. It foreshadows recent reactions against reductionist programs in analytic philosophy of science that are typically directed to explaining, say, biological or psychological phenomena in terms of physics.¹⁸ If even biology depends on laws, although laws different from anything we find in physics, depending on how we understand Hegel's argument it counts even against the possibility of biological explanation.

A similar remark is appropriate for his views of psychology and the

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contemporary pseudosciences physiognomy and phrenology, where he also resists scientific reductionism in any form. As for his remarks on other natural sciences, Hegel's very brief comments on psychology must be understood in the context of what was known when he was writing. His approach to psychology here is later worked out in more detail in the *Encyclopedia*?¹⁹

As usual, he begins with a summary of what he thinks he has just shown. Now linking observation of the object to that of the subject, he suggests that the interest of psychological observation lies in the way that general concepts and individuality coincide when the subject takes itself as its observational object. "Observation finds this free Concept, whose

universality contains just as absolutely developed within it developed individuality, only in the Concept which itself exists as Concept, or in self-consciousness" (§298, 180*).

As was common in his day, Hegel approaches psychology through the "*Laws of Thought*" (§299, 180). Such laws are abstract, hence untrue, since they have no content other than themselves. Their observational content is what merely is, "a merely *existent* content" (§300, 181*). Observation inverts (*verkehrt*) the object it grasps through laws. What it should grasp is the actuality of individuality that lies, not in such laws, but in "acting [tuendes] consciousness" (§301, 181*). This suggests "a new field of psychological study, or how the conscious person really acts, including not only personal habits, but also universal, or ethical action, or the *acting actuality of consciousness* [*handelnden Wirklichkeit des Bewußtseins*]" (§302, 182*). Hegel, who regards the cognitive subject as a real human being, devotes extensive attention to practical action later on in "Reason" and in "Spirit."

Observational psychology will concern all these many "faculties, inclinations, and passions" (§303, 182). Observational psychology is concerned with noting the various faculties, inclinations, and so on, and in relating them in a unitary conception of the person, "the *actual* individuality" (§304, 183). Its laws bring together human individuality with the various circumstances in which it occurs. "Now, the law of this relation of the two sides would have to state the kind of effect and influence exerted on the individuality by these specific circumstances" (§306, 183). Obviously, a person becomes a particular individual in particular circumstances. Since there is no way of inferring from particular circumstances to what an individual will or will not do, " 'psychological necessity' " is "an empty phrase, so empty that there exists the absolute possibility that what is supposed to have had this influence could just

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as well not have had it" (§307, 185*). We cannot understand the relation between a particular human being, or "*being* which would be *in and for itself*" (§ 308, 185), and laws. Like other biological phenomena, human individuality cannot be captured in terms of a law, since "psychological observation discovers no law for the relation of self-consciousness to actuality, or to the world over against it" (§309, 185).

c. Observation of the Relation of Self-Consciousness to its Immediate Actuality: Physiognomy and Phrenology

This very brief discussion of psychology shows that, taken as an object for study, a human individual cannot be grasped through the laws of thought or through any other laws. This is consistent with the wider claim that laws do not apply to organic phenomena. Hegel now applies this lesson in some detail, and with unusual clarity, to efforts to do just this in two contemporary pseudosciences.

Physiognomy and phrenology were devoted to the study of human being through external appearance. Physiognomy, the study of human individuality through the forms and movement of a person's face and figure, and phrenology, a similar effort with respect to the bumps and hollows of skull bones, were due respectively to J. C. Lavater and Franz Joseph Gall. Lavater was a friend of Goethe, whom he influenced.²⁰ Hegel, who holds that organism cannot be described through laws, refutes reductive approaches intended to reduce complex phenomena to their components. His target here is not the reduction of biology or psychology to physics²¹ but rather what is now known in philosophy of mind as the materialist reduction of the mind to the brain, roughly the replacement of any discussion of the mind by discussion of the brain.²²

The claim that there is no law governing the relation of "self-consciousness to actuality" now reappears in the study of "individuality" (§310, 185). One possibility is to take the body as a "sign [Zeichen]" (§311, 186*) of the individual. Once again, the problem is to grasp the relation of the inner and the outer, beginning with the outer as making visible the inner. "This outer, in the first place, acts only as an *organ* in making the inner visible or, in general, a being-for-another" (§312, 187). In principle, if this relation obtained, then "the outer shape could express the inner individuality" (§313, 188).

Unlike astrology, palmistry, and similar pseudosciences, physiog-

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nomy considers the individual "in the *necessary* antithesis of an inner and an outer" (§314, 188*), which relates human consciousness and human existence. For instance, it could be argued that a person is represented through his "hand" that "*is what a man does*" (§315, 189). From this perspective, the "organ must now . . . be taken as a *middle term*" (§316, 189) between the individual in himself and his appearance for others, or again "the movement and form of countenance and figure in general" (§317, 190). So, we may take an expression as reflecting the inner being of a person, as "we see from a man's face whether he is in *earnest* about what he is saying or doing" (§318, 190). Physiognomy, for instance, studies individuality through a person's "features [Zügen]" (§319, 191*) on the grounds that a person's inner self is more important than what he does.

Both pseudosciences are committed to the claim that what one really is is revealed "through the overhasty judgment formed at first sight about the inner nature and character of its shape" (§320, 192*). In the same way as language cannot name the individual, physiognomy, which cannot connect general laws to individuals, provides only "empty subjective opinions" (§321, 193). Echoing Goethe's²³ emphasis on the deed (*Tat*), Hegel insists that "the *true being* of a man is rather his deed" (§322, 193). He follows the views of Solon, the great Athenian lawgiver (see §315), and Aristotle²⁴ that we only know who someone is at the end of life.

In psychology external reality makes "spirit" intelligible, whereas in physiognomy spirit is "the visible invisibility of its essence" (§323, 195). For this to be the case, there must be "a causal connection" between intentions and deeds. This presupposes a solution of the Cartesian problem of the relation of mind to body—Descartes famously locates their interaction in the pineal gland²⁵—since "for spiritual individuality to have an effect on body, it must as cause itself be corporeal" (§325, 195*). It is sometimes thought, say, that "anger" is "in the liver" (§326, 196), or that "brain and spinal cord . . . may be considered as the immediate presence of self-consciousness" (§327, 196).

Since the most plausible view is that the spirit is located in the head, Hegel devotes specific attention to the phrenological view that the brain just is the skull. In this case, the living brain must "display . . . outer reality" (§329, 198) through the skull, so that the brain, regarded as "the organ of self-consciousness, would act causally on the opposite aspect" (§330, 199). It follows that a person is a thing, or more precisely, "the *actuality and existence of man is his skull-bone*" (§331, 200). This

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point is very modern; it is a nearly exact statement of contemporary materialist mind-body identity theory.²⁶

Hegel has little difficulty in showing that the skull has no useful cognitive function. Anticipating the French anthropologist and surgeon P. P. Broca's effort in the second half of the nineteenth century to localize particular mental functions in specific sites in the brain, he suggests the need to correlate particular parts of the skull with particular aspects of spirit. He maintains that "the skull-bone is not an organ of activity" (§333, 200). There is no necessary correlation between different parts of the skull and feelings, emotions, and so on. For from whatever side we look at the matter, there is no necessary reciprocal relation between them, nor any direct indication of such a relation" (§335, 202). Any such correlation is at best fortuitous, since it is always possible that "a bump at some place or other is connected with a particular property, passion, etc." (§336, 203). Spirit is not a thing and human being is free, although it is always possible that "this bump or this hollow on the skull may denote something actual" (§338, 204). Yet it is simply false to regard human consciousness merely as a bone, as in the claim "I regard a bone as *your reality*" (§339, 205).

This complex summary produces relatively meager results that are mainly important with respect to spirit. Like perception, observation of inorganic nature suffers from an inability to connect its various moments to sensuous being. In such observation, the subject freely takes itself as its object, to begin with through the laws of thought, then as a single conscious being. In so doing, the subject strives to know conscious human being by uncovering a necessary relation between what it takes as spirit, or inner, to the outer, nonspiritual reality. As in his account of biology, Hegel maintains here that we must reject the claim in phrenology "that takes the outer to be the expression of the inner" (§340, 206). The survey has shown no clear link between the inner and the outer, since "the moments of the relations present themselves as pure abstractions" (§341, 206). The observational approach simply imagines

the relation between the mind and the brain, or between "spirit" and "a reality that is not conscious" (§342, 207).

Hegel sees the frustration arising from the failure to establish a necessary link as leading to pseudoscientific, materialistic effort to study human being as a thing. In our day, a similar frustration is manifest in the turn to cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence, and similar efforts to find a mechanical model for human being.²⁷ The unavailing effort to show that spirit is a thing leads to a focus on spirit as existent. "It must therefore be regarded as extremely important that the true

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expression has been found for the bare statement about Spirit—that it is" (§343, 208).

In conclusion, Hegel makes two points. First, a human being cannot be known through observation at all. If we want to know ourselves, we must do so through the activity in which we freely realize ourselves. A person is "*itself* the End at which its action aims, whereas in its role of observer it was concerned only with things" (§344, 209). Second, mere observation is intrinsically defective. Since it is not conceptual, it fails to grasp what human being is, hence fails to grasp how the inner and outer relate. In other words, it fails to comprehend "the specific character of the subject and predicate, and their relation in its judgment" (§345, 209*). Expanding the latter point, he contends that since a person is not a thing, but spirit, then true reality is not material but spiritual, or the being of spirit. For "brain fibres and the like, when regarded as the being of Spirit, are no more than a merely hypothetical reality" (§346, 210). The meaning of spirit will only finally be made clear in the chapter "Spirit."

B. The Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness through Itself (durch sich selbst)

At the end of his complex treatment of observation, Hegel returns to his thesis that (as a rational subject) a person cannot be conflated with things, since a person is not a thing but must take itself to be all things. We cannot know life through mere observation, since reason that functions through laws cannot reduce living things to laws. Well before Kierkegaard, who maintained against Hegel that existence cannot be rationally cognized,²⁸ Hegel insists on the existence of an object, or human being, which either cannot be known at all or at least cannot be known through a cognitive approach. Since Hegel rejects previous efforts to relate the nature of human being to what we do, he must provide his own theory. He makes a beginning in his view of human being as self-actualizing.

The observational stage of "Reason" just considered features a passive, theoretical subject. Like the Cartesian subject, the observer is confronted with the problem of knowing an independent external object, say, through the taxonomic classification of natural salencies. The other

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main form of reason features the human subject as intrinsically active. In stressing that we develop as human individuals in and through our activity, Hegel follows Aristotle, Fichte, Schiller,²⁹ and others, and anticipates Marx.³⁰

Hegel develops this approach initially through a general examination of the ways that people realize themselves in what they do, and then more polemically in his critical examination of the Kantian view of practical reason. Both sections are relatively compact; together they take up less space than the elaborate exposition of the subject as passive whose shortcomings Hegel has already exposed.

In his view of the subject as active, Hegel takes his cue from Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle studies human life as an activity in which human potentials are realized. As concerns self-realization, Hegel quickly considers three basic approaches ranging widely over history and culture. He precedes this account by general remarks on practical action.

"Self-Consciousness" taught us how human beings attained self-certainty, or consciousness of themselves. The analysis of contemporary pseudosciences taught us that human being is not just a thing in any simplistic, physical sense. It remains to be shown that the subject is recognized by others in a social setting. "It is Spirit which, in the duplication of

its self-consciousness and in the independence of both, has the certainty of its unity with itself" (§347, 211).

To show that abstract certainty is in fact true, or realized in practice, Hegel returns to the various moments of consciousness from the new perspective of the self-conscious, active individual. He has consistently argued that mind is intrinsically universal. He now combines this point with a further point about practical activity as the way in which individuals realize universal principles and themselves in what they do.

Like language itself, the significance of rational action is general. Since such actions occur within a social context, Hegel will later maintain in the *Philosophy of Right* that society provides the locus of the realization of human freedom and of human reason.³¹ In an important passage, he now forcefully suggests that the inner aspect of human being, or substance, manifests itself in ethical life, in the social existence of individuals, whose highest form is the independent other person, in actual self-consciousness, or custom.

If we take up in reality this goal that is the *Concept* that has already appeared for us ^¾ namely, recognized self-consciousness that has its certainty of itself

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and even its truth in the other free self-consciousness^¾ or we take up the still inner spirit as already successfully existent substance, the ethical realm discloses itself. This is nothing other than, in the self-sufficient actuality of the individual, the absolute spiritual unity of its essence; it is an in itself universal self-consciousness that is so actual in another self-consciousness that this completed self-sufficiency has or is a thing for it, and that in this unity with it is conscious and in this unity with the objectified essence first is self-conscious. (§349, 212*)

Conscious actions fall within the general framework of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), which is based on custom (*Sitte*), or mores. Hegel's view of social activity reflects many influences. Whereas Kant understands practical activity in effect as composed of a series of decisions made by a wholly disinterested subject, Fichte considers practical activity as intrinsically social.³² Following Fichte and disagreeing with Kant, Hegel proposes a conception of practical activity in which each person depends on the recognition accorded by others. In actions within the social context, individuals enact customs that are codified in moral laws. Kant believes that, unlike animals that are realized in the individual, human beings are realized in the species.³³ Hegel follows Herder and Fichte, who were influenced by Kant, in holding that the complete realization of the individual occurs in the life of the people. Like Aristotle, Hegel subordinates the good of the individual to the good of the larger collectivity.³⁴ In an important passage making clear the subordination of individuality to the welfare of the whole, a view that Marx strongly criticized,³⁵ Hegel writes,

It is in fact in the life of a people [eines Volks] that the Concept of self-conscious Reason's actualization—of beholding, in the independence of the 'other', complete unity with it, or having for my object the free thinghood of an 'other' which confronts me and is the negative of myself, as my own being-for-myself—that the Concept has its complete reality. (§350, 212*)

Although he sees the realization of the individual in actions with universal significance, Hegel is not yet in possession of the economic theory that he will later expound briefly as "The System of Needs" in the *Philosophy of Right*.³⁶ Anticipating Marx's theory, he stresses here that through work individuals meet their needs in a particular social context. Earlier Hegel has argued that a person is his deeds. It follows that, as he now puts it, with an eye to the nation, "the whole becomes, as a whole, his own work, for which he sacrifices himself and precisely in so doing receives back from it his own self" (§351, 213). This reading of the relation of the individual to the state is optimistic at best. Hegel

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later took a cautious, more pessimistic view of the personal value of individual self-sacrifice in the *Philosophy of Right*,³⁷ in acknowledging persistent poverty³⁸ and other basic social problems in modern society.

The contention that in a free people "Reason is in truth realized" (§352, 214) suggests that the full realization of reason demands a propitious social environment as well as rational action. In this respect, Hegel examines various possibilities. Obviously, "the life of a free people is only in principle or immediately the *reality* of an ethical order" (§354, 214). Someone immersed in the life of the nation is not therefore self-aware. When he becomes self-aware, "this *immediate* unity with Spirit, the *being* of himself in Spirit, his trust, is lost" (§355, 214*). Another possibility is that the individual has not yet become an integral part of the wider whole, for instance, the nation to which he belongs, since self-consciousness has *not yet attained this happy state* of being the ethical substance, the Spirit of a people" (§356, 215). Yet to take the whole social context as the truth means to focus on the individual within

the group, not apart from it. For "what is sublated in the movement are the individual moments which for self-consciousness are valid in their isolation" (§357, 215*). The task of the individual is to realize himself in actuality, or "to give itself as a particular individual an actual existence" (§358, 216). He does this in opposing the goal to be realized to actuality, since it is "the End which it realizes by sublating that actuality" (§359, 216*). Yet a person, who cannot be realized in isolation, is realized only through an other in which an individual sees itself reflected, in "seeing itself as *this particular individual* in an other, or seeing another self-consciousness as itself" (§359, 216*).

a. Pleasure (*Die Lust*) and Necessity

Hegel canvasses three forms of individual self-realization, all of which he rejects. The discussion takes up in order the hedonist (who acts for his own pleasure), the Romantic individual (who generalizes his own principles to apply to everyone), and the virtuous person (whose efforts are defeated by social reality). The hedonist is aware only of himself; the Romantic is at least aware of others but mainly concerned with self-realization; the virtuous person is concerned with disinterested action.

The discussion begins with hedonism. The term for pleasure (*Lust*) is exceedingly general, corresponding to Hegel's equally general view of human being as motivated by desire. Since antiquity, the criticism of

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hedonism has been steady and withering. Plato already satirizes hedonism in the *Philebus* as an unavailing effort to assuage limitless desire. For Hegel, people motivated primarily by pleasure take themselves to be all reality, whereas "true actuality is merely that being which is the actuality of the *individual* consciousness" (§360, 217).

In his account of pleasure, Hegel describes a type of person rather than any particular individual. Like the subject of Goethe's *Faust*, who sells his soul to the devil, such a person manifests "pure individuality" (§361, 218). Although not necessarily destructive, pleasure in animate existence (*lebendiges Dasein*) is self-stultifying since "the realization of this End is itself the setting-aside of the latter" (§362, 218). The hedonist searches for pleasure as the highest good that has no permanency while fleeing necessity. Such an individual is prey to a necessity of his own making, since "this *absolute relation* and abstract movement constitute necessity" (§363, 219). Hedonism is self-stultifying since "it took hold of life and possessed it; but in so doing it really laid hold of death" (§364, 220). The life of hedonism is a "*transition* of its living being into a lifeless necessity" (§365, 220) directed by nothing other than pleasure itself, or mere feeling. At most, a hedonist can be aware of the "the loss of itself in necessity" (§366, 221).

b. The Law of the Heart and the Madness (*Wahnsinn*) of Self-Conceit

As in his earlier critique of the feeling heart (see §§217 ff.), so here Hegel's rationalist approach conflicts with any explanation of human action through emotion. In the second form of individual self-realization, the subject again acts individualistically. The difference is that it now has the "character of necessity or universality" (§367, 221) lacking in the actions of the hedonist. The law motivating its actions specifies an end that the conscious individual realizes. In depicting this law as its very own law of the heart, Hegel refers obliquely to Pascal's idea that we act from the heart on reasons that we ourselves do not understand.³⁹ In the Romantic literary tradition, this attitude is illustrated through the isolated individual struggling against a cruel world and humanity prey to the necessity of fate. The individual, who is moved by the law of the heart, struggles against "necessity which contradicts the law of the heart" (§370, 222) in displaying personal excellence on behalf of humanity. Sartre, a contemporary Romantic, claims that each individual acts for all people everywhere.⁴⁰ Yet someone who follows his

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own personal law is only interested in realizing himself. For "what is essential is not the bare conformity to law as such, but that in the law it has consciousness of *itself*, that therein it has satisfied *itself*" (§372, 223).

The very idea of a personal law, which is valid for everyone, is self-contradictory. It is inconsistent with the notion of law in general, since "what the individual brings into being through the realization of his law, is not *his* law" (§372, 223). In taking one's own law as universal, one only contradicts universal law. Obviously, "others do not find in this content the fulfillment of the law of *their* hearts" (§373, 224). Further, the Romantic individual fails to recognize that law in general is the law for everyone. Hegel is very close to Rousseau's view of the general will in writing that "divine and human ordinance" is in fact "really animated by the consciousness of all, that it is the law of every heart" (§374, 224-225).

A kind of basic self-deception is at work in the Romantic soul that beats for humanity but substitutes itself for reality. In typically florid language that captures the phenomenon of the "true believer" in the form of the political or religious individual, who alone knows, Hegel writes that such a person

speaks of the universal order as a perversion of the law of the heart and of its happiness, a perversion invented by fanatical priests, gluttonous despots and their minions, who compensate themselves for their own degradation by degrading and oppressing others, a perversion which has led to the nameless misery of deluded humanity. (§377, 226)

Individual claims alone to know immediately conflict with other similar claims, since the law of the heart is "itself essentially perverted" (§378, 227). This law is motivated by the desire to save oppressed humanity. Yet it inevitably leads to a Hobbesian struggle of all against all, where each claims to represent the correct law, "a universal resistance and struggle of all against one another, in which each claims validity for his own individuality" (§379, 227). Like the hedonist, the Romantic soul also acts in a self-stultifying way that impedes the realization of what is sought.

c. Virtue and the Way of the World

In the final shape of individual self-realization considered by Hegel, the relation between the individual and the world is simultaneously a unity and a diversity. Hegel here follows Kant's *Metaphysics of*

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Morals, a theory of virtue (*Tugendlehre*, from *Tugend*, meaning "virtue") that insists on unswerving obedience to the dictates of practical reason in complete abstraction from empirical factors. His remarks apply to anyone concerned with following the letter, but not with realizing the spirit, of a particular moral code. As in his critique of the unhappy consciousness, he objects to the very idea that the good, or even the good for human beings, consists in mere submission to a principle.

The virtuous person is one for whom "law is the essential moment, and individuality the one to be nullified" (§381, 228), for whom self-abnegatory obedience is the key to personal existence. This attitude, which is exemplified earlier in the book in the discussion of the unhappy consciousness, recurs here in the deontological (nonteleological) Kantian view of morality that it is concerned, not with consequences of actions, but with the principles motivating them. Such a view is widely exemplified, say, in Alasdair MacIntyre's recent proposal to return to a form of ethics based on virtue⁴¹ and, in wholly different form, in such moral monsters as the Eichmanns of our time. Yet it simply fails to have anything useful to say to what Hegel calls the way of the world.

Hegel has little difficulty in showing the inconsistency of the virtuous attitude. A generally Kantian view of virtue, which requires unquestionable submission to the law identified as good in itself, requires sacrificing anything resembling individuality. The virtuous individual combines the hedonism of the isolated person seeking pleasure in the way of the world and the attitude of someone acting from the heart who takes himself as the criterion of law. Both come together in the virtuous individual, whose action is every bit as self-stultifying, since "for the virtuous consciousness the *law* is *essential*, and individuality to be sublated" (§381, 228*). The relevant difference is that the law no longer appears as an external necessity but as internalized, "as a necessity *within consciousness itself*" (§382, 229).

The virtuous person is faced with a dilemma in the opposition between the world that is intrinsically perverted and the internalized law that it strives to realize in its actions. "It should now receive its true reality through the sublation of individuality, the principle of the perversion" (§383, 230*). The universal to be realized is only "true in *faith* or *in itself*, still not actual, but an *abstract* universal" (§384, 230*). What is called the good, or the universal,

precisely depends on individual self-sacrifice "for its animation [Belebung] and movement of the principle" (§385, 231*). In this struggle between the virtuous attitude and social reality, either can win since "it is not apparent whether virtue thus armed will conquer vice" (§386, 231).

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The conflict turns on the commitment either to principle in disregard of the individual or, conversely, to the individual in disregard of principle. It is difficult to realize virtue since social reality is intrinsically resistant to principles, for "the way of the world is alert" (§388, 233*). In sacrificing oneself to virtue, the virtuous person also sacrifices the possibility of realizing it since social reality (*Wirklichkeit*) consists in individuals. "The 'way of the world' was supposed to be the perversion of the good because it had individuality for its principle; yet, individuality is the principle of reality" (§389, 233*). In defeating what passes for virtue, social reality only overcomes an appearance, or "the essence-less abstraction of virtue" (§390, 233).

With Kant specifically in mind, Hegel notes that, unlike the ancient conception of virtue, whose real content is rooted in the substance of the people, or in social reality, the kind of virtue under discussion fails to acknowledge that the world is both good and bad, hence not simply to be opposed. Hegel advantageously contrasts the Greek, especially the Aristotelian, with the Kantian conception of virtue. Unlike Kant, who is concerned more narrowly with just principles motivating action, Aristotle is concerned with the good life in the social context. The ancients understood that universal principles cannot be realized through sacrifice of individuality, since "the movement of individuality is the reality of the universal" (§391, 235). If we realize that the individual's action is motivated by universal principles, "for its action is at the same time an implicitly universal action" (§392, 235), the opposition between individuality and virtue disappears. Hegel, who disagrees with the Kantian view that morality requires selfless abnegation, maintains that we realize principles in everything we do, whose realization constitutes the essence of individuality.

Thus the doing and acting of individuality is a goal in itself; the employment of its powers, the play of their externalization, is what gives life to what would otherwise be a dead in-itself. But the in-itself is not an unrealized abstract universal, but is itself the present and reality of the process of individuality. (§393, 235*)

C. Individuality Real In and For Itself

Hegel's critical remarks about the virtuous attitude constitute the opening salvo of a broad attack on Kantian moral theory

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that will continue in the next section. He now passes to a profounder kind of virtue, which is identified as honesty of purpose concerning the matter at hand (*Sache*). This includes reason as a legislative faculty that promulgates allegedly universal laws as true, which hold for all people in all times and places but which in fact are meaningless. It further includes the rational critique of laws, in which we find that such rules as noncontradiction are insufficient since they fit practically any law at all. The negative result is that reason cannot be the ethical guide, either as promulgating or even as criticizing laws.

In this section, Hegel studies a model of the human subject as a practical being, who is embedded in a social context. Such a person, whose activity is the median point between individuality and universal principles, seeks to realize himself, not in opposition to, but rather within, immediate reality. Previous models of the subject exhibit an unresolved dualism between certainty and truth, since the subject was never able to actualize its ends. This separation is now overcome, since it turns out that the human being just is what it does. "Action [Das Tun] is in itself its truth and reality, and the exposition or the expression of individuality is its end in and for itself" (§394, 236*).

The discussion in "Reason" has so far examined views of the subject as a passive observer, or as actualizing itself through its activity. These views, which presuppose a distinction between self-consciousness and being, are now unified. For "self-consciousness now holds fast to the simple unity of being and self" (§395, 237*). Hegel here paints an optimistic picture of the self-conscious subject, devoid of restrictions, which flawlessly realizes itself through activity that is the direct continuation of its thought. "Since individuality is reality itself, the material of its effecting and the goal of its doing are in the doing itself"

(§396, 237*). The activity of the individual merely makes explicit what is implicit in a complete identity between what is in itself (*an sich*), or its form as a thought unity (*gedachte Einheit*), and its form as existent unity (*seiende Einheit*).

a. The Spiritual Kingdom and Deceit, or the 'Matter in Hand' Itself

Hegel distinguishes three forms of individuality in the full sense, beginning with a detailed account of intrinsically real individuality. This furnishes a criterion that he then applies in more rapid

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treatments of types of practical reason. Recent action theory is often limited to grasping the difference between an action and a motion.⁴² In comparison, Hegel provides an unusually rich description of the individual as consciously acting to realize goals in one of the profoundest passages in the book. Marx later echoes this idea in his famous image of the many-sided human being.⁴³

The individual whom Hegel has in mind is a real human being, or "a single and specific one" (§397, 237). Individuality presupposes a finite human being, who, from the perspective of consciousness, is wholly unlimited, hence at liberty to realize himself in unimpeded fashion in the social world. A human being, or "this limitation of being, however, cannot limit the action of consciousness, for this is here a perfected relation to itself.' relation to an other, which would be a limitation of it, has been eliminated" (§398, 238*). Like the Fichtean self or the Sartrean existentialist, the Promethean individual is not limited by anyone or anything other than himself.

Hegel now develops a broadly Aristotelian view of the realization of purpose in and through action. The determinate nature of an individual is its purpose (*Zweck*). A person's determinate nature is depicted as a triple relation: the object in which purpose is realized (*Gegenstand*); the conscious goal (*Zweck*), or purpose, that is realized; and the activity that intentionally realizes the purpose in the form of the object.

There is an identity in difference between the subjective purpose and its objective realization. For "these different sides are now with respect to the concept of this sphere so to be grasped that their content remains the same and no difference enters" (§400, 239*). People have particular capacities, talents, and so on, that are manifested in what they do. Yet we only know who we are when we have acted.

In a profound remark, anticipating depth psychology, Hegel notes that much of what we do is done unconsciously. It is only when the deed is done that we become aware of the result and, hence, of who we are. "What it is *in itself* it hence knows out of its actuality. An individual can hence not know what *it is* before it has brought itself to actuality through its action" (§401, 240*). The relation between a given person's purpose and deeds is, hence, circular, since who the person is only becomes apparent in what the person does.

The individual who is going to act seems, therefore, to find himself in a circle in which each moment already presupposes the other, and thus he seems unable to find a beginning, because he only gets to know his original nature, which must be his End, from the deed, while, in order to act, he must have that End beforehand. (§401, 240)

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What we do allows for comparison, since "the work, like the individual's original nature which it expresses, is something specific" (§402, 241). Predicates such as "good" or "bad" are out of place. For everything a person does expresses his nature "and for that reason it is all good" (§403, 241). Similarly, emotional reactions of all kinds are inappropriate, "altogether out of place" (§404, 242).

According to this theory of self-realization through activity, "the work [Werk] produced is the reality which consciousness gives itself" (§405, 242). Conversely, the work itself "has received into itself the whole nature of the individuality" (§405, 243). In the work, we become aware of the difference between the person as a potential and as a real individuality, between the person as implicit and explicit, or "between doing and being" (§406, 244). We further become aware of the differences between what is desired and what is achieved, for instance, "between purpose and that which is the original essentiality" (§407, 244). And we finally become aware of "the unity and necessity of action" (§408, 245) as the means relating purpose to actuality. True work unites universality and being that endures beyond whatever

contingent factors affect the individual's activity. "This unity is the true work; it is the very heart of the matter [die Sache selbst]" (§409, 246).

Since what we do has an intrinsically universal character, the so-called heart of the matter uniting the individual actions and social reality "expresses the *spiritual* essentiality in which all these moments have lost all validity of their own, and are valid therefore only as universal" (§410, 246). When purpose has been realized through action as actuality, the individual has finally become aware of himself in "consciousness of its substance" (§411, 246). Someone is honest (*ehrlich*) who recognizes and strives toward personal realization through the general principle implicit in the matter at hand. Whatever happens, such an individual has at least desired to realize his purpose, "at least *willed* it" (§413, 247).

Hegel remarks obscurely that honesty (*Ehrlichkeit*) requires that the conscious individual "does not bring together its thoughts about the 'matter in hand'" (§414, 248). Perhaps he means that we ought not to represent a failure to realize our goals as in fact their realization. In practice, "the truth of this integrity . . . is not as honest as it seems" (§415, 248-249), since the individual who acts is concerned both with the action and with himself. What we do has the peculiar characteristic of being simultaneously for ourselves and, as universal, for others as well. Actions are always partly disinterested and partly interested, as "a play of individualities with one another in which each and all find them-

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selves both deceiving and deceived" (§416, 250). This ambivalence cannot be overcome. Notwithstanding the views of Kant and organized religion, we can never overcome self-interest in wholly disinterested action. For the matter in hand is a "subject in which individuality is just as much as itself, or as *this*, as *all* individuals; and the universal is only a *being* [*Sein*] as the action of all and each, a reality in that this particular consciousness knows it as its singular reality and as the reality of all" (§418, 252*).

b. Reason as Lawgiver

Hegel depicts individuals as self-realizing in the social context. He now more briefly tests this theory against the rival Kantian view of moral, or practical, reason as providing and testing laws. We recall once more the familiar Cartesian distinction between the subject as a passive spectator, exemplified in forms of observation, or as an actor, illustrated in types of self-realization. From the latter perspective, a person is both conscious in a general way, since consciousness is intrinsically universal, and specifically self-aware. "Spiritual essence is, in its simple being, *pure consciousness*, and *this* self-consciousness" (§419, 252). Individuals, who are aware of themselves, realize their ends and themselves in what they do, the matter in hand, in ethical, or universal, fashion.

This 'matter in hand' is therefore the ethical substance [*sittliche Substanz*]; and consciousness of it is the ethical consciousness. Its object is likewise for it the True, for it combines self-consciousness and being in a single unity. It has the value of the Absolute, for self-consciousness cannot and does not want any more to go beyond this object. (§420, 253)

Such an individual acts to carry out "the laws of ethical substance," that is, principles that are "immediately acknowledged," whose "origin and justification" (§421, 253) cannot be given, but which constitute the essence of self-consciousness. We can say that "*healthy Reason* immediately knows what is right and good" (§422, 253*), just as it knows the laws. Similarly, these laws must be "accepted and considered immediately" (§423, 253).

The real difficulty lies not in understanding the consequences of our actions but in choosing the principles on which to act. Kant's well-known suggestion is that the maxim, or principle of action, must be universalizable, hence potentially applicable to all people in all similar situations. In a famous passage, he records his awe at the starry night

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outside and the moral law within.⁴⁴ This amounts to the claim, which Hegel now examines, that healthy reason immediately knows what is right and good, which it expresses in the form of unconditional moral laws. For Hegel, even if we allow Kant this move, the view fails. For we cannot rationally promulgate universal moral laws. It should be remarked in passing that Hegel's argument counts equally against secular as well as religious theories of ethics.

His argument, which is the origin of the famous charge that Kant's moral theory has merely formal validity, can be summarized as follows. Take any principle, say, the injunction "Everyone ought to speak the truth" (§424, 254), or, again, the so-called golden rule (§425). Abstract principles depend on real human beings to instantiate them. Any universal moral law, such as the injunction to speak truthfully, requires that a particular person act in a particular way according to what that person knows or believes. Since a universal moral law, which is binding on a particular individual, cannot be formulated, we must abandon the very idea that we can formulate universal laws that have any content at all, or "give up all idea of a universal, absolute content" (§426, 256). What is left is "the mere form of universality" (§427, 256), or the mere tautology that functions as the standard for reason that no longer gives but merely "*critically examines*" (§428, 236) laws.

C. Reason as Testing the Laws

At stake is whether some laws are more relevant for social life than others. Such laws are only formal tautologies, which are all equally valid; and no law is better than any other. On this level, we merely study laws as given, without regard to contingent reality, for instance, a particular "commandment simply as commandment" (§429, 257). Since in so doing we abstract from content, "this testing does not get very far"; and we are left only with a mere tautology for which "one content is just as acceptable to it as its opposite" (§430, 257). For instance, it is equally possible, if we are unconcerned with utility, to argue for or against the possession of private property (*Eigentum*). As long as we are careful to formulate our principles as simple tautologies, as long as we do not violate the law of noncontradiction, then "the criterion of law which Reason possesses within itself fits every case equally well, and is thus in fact no criterion at all" (§431, 259). Although Kant holds that reason both gives moral laws and tests them, neither the giving nor the testing of such laws can be rationally defended.

Hegel is at some pains to draw the lesson of this failure and to offer

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an alternative model. Both the giving and now the testing of universal laws are "futile" (§432, 259). Both attitudes rest on the mistaken view that reason, correctly applied to the matter in hand, will yield, or enable us to test, universal principles. Since what we call law is what a single person takes as the law, "to legislate immediately in that way is thus the tyrannical insolence which makes caprice into a law and ethical behaviour into obedience to such caprice" (§434, 260). We are meant to infer that, under the cover of the putative universality of the moral principles that he proposes, Kant is guilty of taking his own preferences as universally binding on everyone.

This is an important criticism, since the key to Kant's moral theory is the counterclaim that maxims, or principles of practical action, can be determined which follow in wholly disinterested fashion from reason itself. The general approach illustrated by Kant suffers from "a negative relation to substance or real spiritual being" (§435, 260) that yields no more than formal universality. Hegel's long discussion of reason now culminates in his own view of ethical law. Despite his criticism of Kant, he defends moral objectivity, or moral truth, against the kind of relativism that makes right depend on what each person thinks, a view that Plato examines and rejects in the first book of the *Republic*.

An important clue to Hegel's positive view has already been provided in his passing remark (see §390) that, in the ancient world, virtue was based on the spiritual substance of the nation. From this perspective, he now maintains that "the spiritual being thus exists first of all for self-consciousness as law which has an *intrinsic* being" (§436, 260). It is accepted, not by a single person, but by all concerned, as he says with a nod to Rousseau's idea of the general will, as the "pure will of all," for "ethical *self* -consciousness is *immediately* one with essential being" (§436, 261). For the individual has identified with the group that already functions according to general principles, or so-called eternal laws accepted within a particular social context.

Hegel's understanding of "eternal law," which has nothing to do with religious claims, can be clarified as follows. He seems early on to have embraced a rational (i.e., *Vernunftreligion*) as opposed to a positive approach to religion, which is based on the authority of its founder. The idea of a religion based on reason was in the air at the time. Kant explicitly describes Christianity as a religion based on reason, hence as natural.⁴⁵ This idea goes all the way back

in Hegel's writings to his very early essay "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" (1795-1796). There, probably following the German dramatist and critic Gotthold

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Ephraim Lessing (who is not named, but who argued that religious affirmation is not based on historical events but on faith),⁴⁶ he maintains that religion cannot be founded on tradition. He further argues against Lessing, in a Kantian manner, that there are eternal truths based on reason alone.⁴⁷ Such principles do not depend for their acceptance on either personal authority or contingent phenomena, such as miracles. He illustrates truly moral religion through the command, from Matthew 21-22, "Thou shalt not kill," which, in closely Kantian fashion, he claimed to be universalizable and valid for every rational being.⁴⁸

In the meantime, Hegel has become very critical of the Kantian moral theory. He seems to follow Aristotle's distinction in the *Rhetoric* between special, written law and general, or universal, unwritten law, which is the law of nature common to all people.⁴⁹ What he now calls 'eternal law' has as its content principles regulating familial life that are both prior to the legal code governing the social world and correct as such. One can infer that we accept such laws as valid since they are valid, and their claim to validity does not depend on the fact that we accept them. I take Hegel not merely to be entertaining this possibility but to be endorsing it as a way to have moral standards that do not depend either on making or on testing laws, two approaches that he has criticized.

What he means by this is not the obviously religious claim apparent in simplistic approaches to the Bible as revealing a univocal, universal truth. Since he is basing himself on Aristotle, it is not surprising that Hegel, who was steeped in the Greek classics, cites as an example the "unwritten and infallible law of the gods" (§437, 261) in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Such laws are not validated by any individual; they are not right because they are not contradictory, but just are right. For instance, respect for property rights might be said to require neither the making nor the testing of laws. An individual acknowledges such rights from within the social group, such as the country, or the existing ethical community, which just is the actuality of this purpose reflected in the conscience of each person. "Through the fact that right for me is in and for itself I am within the ethical substance that is the *essence* of self-consciousness. But this self-consciousness is *its actuality* and *existence*, its *self* and its *will*" (§§437, 262*).

What for Hegel was evident when he wrote the *Phenomenology* later became less evident. In the *Philosophy of Right*, he will later take care to secure the right to property. It is not obvious that there are many, or

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indeed any, so-called social universals that just are correct without justification. Hegel simply does not do enough to make out a convincing case for his alternative. It is entirely possible that laws he regards as self-evidently true represent nothing more than his own preferences, deriving from his typical German Grecophilia. If he hadn't been so steeped in the Greek classics, he might have been less enthusiastic about the whole idea of eternal law. Obviously particular societies accord absolute value to different specific moral principles. Yet we need not accept Hegel's view of eternal law to agree that it is only in the social context that human individuality is realized.

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Chapter 6

"Spirit"

In this chapter, we reach the heart of the book: the center of Hegel's great examination of reason. Translation is crucial here, since the rendering of *Geist* as "mind" (as in Baillie's translation of the *Phenomenology*) incorrectly suggests an analogy with analytic philosophy

of mind, say, with the materialist View of the relation of the mind to the brain that Hegel rejects in his critique of contemporary pseudoscience.

Spirit is Hegel's main philosophical category in this book, arguably even his main philosophical category overall. Writers on Hegel usually do not say nearly enough about spirit, perhaps because they do not know what to make of it or even because they do not know what Hegel makes of it. A typical approach is to trace the different senses of *Geist*.¹ Those who discuss spirit mainly avoid more than a cursory effort to consider its dual religious and philosophical background so crucial for Hegel.² Apparently the only book in the English-language Hegel literature, perhaps the only work in the immense Hegel literature, directly devoted to this crucial topic considers only its religious dimension.³

In any account of Hegel's view of spirit, it is useful to consider briefly its background, on which he drew, as well as its emergence in his thought. Spirit is an old but never fully clarified idea, probably best known in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, according to which the Holy Spirit is God under the form of the third person.⁴ The doctrine of the Trinity is relatively recent. At the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, nothing more than belief in the Holy Spirit was affirmed. Trinitarian

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doctrine was only elaborated in the last quarter of the fourth century.⁵ Earlier, Tertulian and Aphraates used "spirit" as a synonym for Christ. According to Origen, who worked out a parallel between the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of Logos,⁶ the Holy Spirit belongs to the Godhead but as a creature occupies a lower stage than the Son.

Differences in approach to spirit are inevitable, since the textual basis in scripture is extremely weak. For Gregory of Nazianus, writing in 380, about the time that the trinitarian doctrine was emerging, "to be only slightly in error [i.e., about the Holy Spirit] was to be orthodox."⁷ Scripture itself never seems to call the Holy Spirit God. Examples include the passage in Isaiah 63:7-14 where the spirit is identified with God and the reference in Romans 1:3-4 where the distinction between the spirit and the flesh is drawn to speak about the relation of the divine and the human in Christ. Alan Olson, who has studied the problem closely, maintains that the relative lack of theological reflection about spirit is due to the rapid development of theological monarchism that led instead to ecclesiology. He regards the Christian doctrine of spirit as a mere potpourri.⁸

Spirit is an important theme in post-Kantian German idealism, particularly for Fichte and Hegel, who build on such predecessors as Montesquieu and Herder. In *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu argues for a general spirit influenced by climate, religion, laws, and government.⁹ Herder maintains that through the study of a people's language we understand the people.¹⁰ Fichte develops a complex view of spirit in his later thought. For faith, the individual belongs both to a sensuous and a spiritual world, where he operates through the will.¹¹ A people, for instance, the Germans, has an intrinsic spirit that animates the nation and is manifest in language.¹²

The unclarified status of the Christian conception of spirit and the diffuse way it appears in modern philosophy made it easy for Hegel to adapt it for his own philosophical purposes. It is a main theme in his writings as early as his first major study, unpublished during his lifetime: "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate."¹³ His conception of spirit draws on the Lutheran view as well as selected philosophical views: the ancient Greek concept of virtue, the spirit of a people in Herder and Fichte, and so on. He consistently understands spirit from a Lutheran perspective. As late as his last period in Berlin, he insists that Luther's teachings are recognized by philosophy, meaning his philosophy, as true.¹⁴ He describes the Lutheran view of the relation among God,

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subjective will, and being as the richest not yet fully developed view.¹⁵

The theme of spirit runs throughout Hegel's writings. In a discussion of the Reformation, he describes the three aspects of spirit as self-reflexive, thinking (*denkender Geist*,) and concrete speculative thought. The Reformation began the so-called main revolution, or the Protestant Reformation, against the Roman Catholic view of religion based on authority, in showing how spirit became aware of its reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) in and through spirit,¹⁶ without priests.¹⁷ This marked the beginning of freedom of the spirit.¹⁸ In a passage on the metaphysical period in modern philosophy, he draws attention to a link between Luther's religious revolution and Descartes's role in beginning modern philosophy. In a reference to

Lutheranism, he describes the Protestant principle as the view that in Christianity consciousness focuses on its contents in making thought its principle.

Philosophy, on its own, proper grounds, wholly leaves theology with respect to its principle. Philosophy asserts the principle of thought as the principle of the world. In the world, everything is regulated through thought. The Protestant Principle is that in Christianity innerness [Innerlichkeit] in general comes as thought to consciousness, as that on which everyone has a claim; indeed, thought is the duty of each, since everything is based on it. Philosophy is, hence, the universal situation, on which everyone knows how to pass judgment; for everyone thinks from his earliest period [von Haus aus].¹⁹

Such thinkers as Michel Montaigne, Pierre Charron, and Niccolò Machiavelli belong neither to philosophy nor to the history of philosophy but to general culture.²⁰ Descartes is the genius who began the modern philosophical tradition in focusing on thought that becomes the principle of philosophy. "René Descartes is in fact the true beginner of modern philosophy in so far as it makes thought into its principle. Thought for itself is here different from philosophizing theology."²¹ In focusing on thought as such, Descartes began philosophy anew. "He began from the beginning [von vorn], from thought as such; and this is an absolute beginning [Anfang]."²²

In pointing to the dual religious and philosophical origins of Hegel's view of spirit, I mean to acknowledge an obvious objection to an epistemological reading of the *Phenomenology*.²³ In virtue of his deep interest in religion, Hegel is often understood as a religious thinker.²⁴ It would be an error even to attempt to diminish the importance that religion has for Hegel. Yet that does not mean that his theory is a spe-

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cifically religious theory. For as concerns spirit, he transforms what is originally a religious concept into an epistemological one without transforming his philosophy into a philosophy of religion.

He does not do this in the *Differenzschrift*, his first philosophical publication in 1801. He begins to do this as early as the next year in his essay *Faith and Knowledge*. His criticism of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte ends with an appeal to "re-establish for philosophy the Idea of absolute freedom and along with the absolute Passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday."²⁵ This is an early statement of the speculative view of the subject, certain of its freedom, which he later advances in the *Phenomenology*. In place of Kant's pure reason, he offers a view of impure reason, or spirit.

The critique of Kantian morality begun in the chapter on reason continues in the chapter on spirit. Hegel's critique reflects the difference between the Kantian word "morality" (Moralität) and, following Fichte,²⁶ the term "ethics" (Sittlichkeit). Just as reason relates to spirit as its further development, so Kantian morality relates to ethics as the social completion of an abstract perspective. Kant is not simply in error, although his discussion is incomplete. There are large portions of the story that he does not tell, and whose significance he cannot perceive since his focus is abstract. As in his criticism of law in natural science, Hegel's objection to Kantian morality identifies a failure to grasp the concrete, that is, the individual object or person.

In his account of spirit, and in place of abstract morality, Hegel outlines an ethics that cannot be disjoined from the context in which it occurs. Following Kant and the Christian doctrine that inspires it, morality is often understood as a domain for the establishment of a series of rules, or moral code, to be followed. For Hegel, ethics concerns neither promulgating nor following rules but the life of the nation.

"Spirit" is divided into three parts, with three sections each, preceded by general remarks. On this level, the Cartesian difficulty concerning the transition from certainty to truth that still troubles Kantian morality has finally been resolved. Unlike the rational subject, the spiritual subject is fully aware that it is at the root of the social world. "Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself" (§438, 263).

The crucial step from reason to spirit, equivalent to accepting Hegel's thesis that we can only understand cognition from the perspective of real human beings, lies in the transition from the passive, theoretical

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attitude of the spectator as observer, still the topic of observational reason, to the active attitude of people who realize themselves in what they do. Kantian morality points in that direction, although it lacks a coherent account of rational action. Hegel improves on Kant in

insisting that human beings are embedded in society, and, by extension, in history. He transforms what for Kant is still a purely logical reconstruction of the conditions of knowledge and morality, an approach recently defended again by the German social theorists Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas,²⁷ into a practical, historical process.

In breaking with Kant, Hegel does not break with the Kantian "constructivist" insight that we know only what we "produce." In part, Hegel has already made good on this claim in showing that we know ourselves and are known by others in and through our deeds. He elaborates this insight in his chapter on spirit. Unlike the observer in "Reason," who relates to what is merely different, in "Spirit" we are aware that otherness merely is us in external form. By definition, spirit is a person aware that he is actual in and through what he does: "But essence that is in and for itself, and which is at the same time actual as consciousness and aware of itself, this is Spirit" (§438, 263). This is a unity underlying diversity that resonates on different levels, such as the unity between the individual and the social context. "Its spiritual essence has already been designated as ethical *substance*; but Spirit is the *actuality* of that substance" (§439, 263). More generally, the distinction between subject and object is seen to be merely relative, since the "world has completely lost the meaning for the self of something alien to it, just as the self has completely lost the meaning of a being-for-self separated from the world, whether dependent on it or not" (§439, 263-264).

We recall that for Descartes, knowledge requires that we become certain about the subject by regressing from the world, or objectivity, to subjectivity in order only then to return to the objective external world. Spirit resolves both aspects of the Cartesian problem. First, it secures the subject that turns out to be, or to exist and to be aware of itself as, self-subsistent, or "self-supporting, absolute, real being" (§440, 264). Second, since spirit is nothing other than people who knowingly realize themselves in what they do, human beings, who become self-conscious, find themselves in a world they have never left. As the resolution of the Cartesian problem that dominates the modern philosophical tradition, spirit is the terminus ad quem toward which other forms of subjectivity tend. In a summary of the preceding discussions in "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness," and "Reason," Hegel writes,

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Spirit is, hence, consciousness in general which embraces sense-certainty, perception, and the Understanding, in so far as in its self-analysis Spirit holds fast [to the fact] that it is objectively existent reality, and abstracts [from the fact] that this reality is its own being-for-self. If, on the contrary, it holds fast to the other moment of the analysis, viz. that its object is its own being-for-self, then it is self-consciousness. But as immediate consciousness of the being that is in and for itself, as unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, it is consciousness that has Reason; it is consciousness which, as the word 'has' indicates, has the object in a shape which is implicitly determined by Reason or by the value of the category, but in such a way that it does not as yet have for consciousness the value of the category. Spirit is that consciousness which we were considering immediately prior to the present stage. Finally, when this Reason which Spirit has is intuited by Spirit and is its world, then Spirit exists in its truth; it is Spirit, the ethical essence that has an actual existence. (§440, 264-265*)

Since he holds that we only discover subjectivity in practical action, Hegel stresses the relation of spirit to the ethical world. His view of human being as rooted in society leads easily to the insight that the spiritual dimension of a society is "the *ethical* life of a nation" (§441, 265). Foreshadowing the discussion to follow, he notes that "the *living ethical world*" that is "its *truth*" (§442, 265) is divided into the legal framework that is the formal basis of modern social life and the opposing worlds of culture and faith (*Glauben*). These are topics he will take up in "Spirit." Once more foreshadowing the course of the discussion to come, he casts spirit, or individuals, who are conscious of realizing themselves in their actions, as the final goal of the cognitive process, or as absolute spirit. "The goal and outcome of that process will appear on the scene as the real self-consciousness of absolute Spirit" (§443, 265-266). In virtue of the persistent religious approach to Hegel, it is important to note that in Hegel's theory "absolute spirit" is not a reference to the Christian God but to ourselves.

A. The True Spirit: Ethics (Die Sittlichkeit)

Hegel's survey of spirit distantly follows the Kantian progression from pure to practical reason. His discussion, which often appears arbitrary, reflecting more his personal preferences than a tightly structured view, is repetitious, often with very small variations, in a way that only serves to confuse the reader.

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He begins with an account of true spirit as ethics (Sittlichkeit) that Miller, following Baillie (who is perhaps only manifesting his own political preferences), curiously renders as "ethical order." Hegel correlates the diversity of human existence with the diversity of human consciousness. Spirit, or "consciousness," separates, or "forces its moments apart," through intrinsically ethical "action" that realizes purposes in "substance" and "consciousness" (§444, 266) of it. From the tendency of consciousness to generate distinctions, Hegel now obscurely concludes that it divides up into human and divine law, roughly a distinction between the formal legal code and the unwritten law governing familial relations. "It thus [also] splits itself up into distinct ethical substances, into a human and a divine law [göttliches Gesetz]" (§445, 266).

Hegel's discussion is not based on the familiar scholastic view of the relation between human and divine law, in which the former derives from the latter. It is rather based on his detailed article²⁸ from earlier in the Jena period (1803), before he wrote the *Phenomenology*. In the article, beginning from Fichte's recent study *The Science of Rights (Grundlage des Naturrechts, 1796)*,²⁹ he studies the Greek view in some detail. Consistent with his view of ancient virtue as embodied in the spiritual substance of the community, he now depicts the divine law—an example might be the prohibition of incest regarded as natural and universal—as regulating natural relationships, for instance, how family members interact in the absence of laws specifically created to deal with particular social situations. Human law, based on divine law, regulates all other relationships within civil society and the state.

There is a tension between the two ethical spheres of human law and divine law. The individual acts consciously, but without consciousness of the consequences of his actions. For the person is "on the one hand ignorant of what it does, and on the other knows what it does, a knowledge which for that reason is a deceptive knowledge" (§445, 266). In *Reason in History*, in a different context Hegel invokes the cunning of reason (*List der Vernunft*).³⁰ His point is not only that our intentions and their results often conflict but above all that there is a universal, or general, idea, which is realized through the particular person, say, Napoleon, who is often destroyed in the process. Here he maintains that actions intended to bring about an ethical world often only result in destroying it. "In point of fact, however, the ethical substance became real self-consciousness through this process; or this particular self became being in and for itself; but in this way ethics [Sittlichkeit] has

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been destroyed" (§445, 266*). Later on in the chapter, he will develop this point in his discussion of the French Revolution.

a. The Ethical World Human and Divine Law: Man and Woman

Hegel studies three important aspects of the ethical context: the ethical world, ethical action, and the legal situation (*Zustand*). This list, which reflects his view of Greek society, scarcely seems exhaustive, even with respect to the period in which he wrote. He could equally well have focused on, say, economics or political representation. Within the ethical world, the individual is "divided [teilt sich]" (§446, 267), or subject to conflicting influences. Human individuality (*Einzelheit*) is "self-consciousness in general, not of a particular, contingent consciousness" in which spirit is reflected and by which it is realized "as actual substance, . . . a nation" (§447, 267). As realized in the nation, "this spirit can be called the human law, because it is essentially in the form of a reality that is conscious of itself," that is, "concrete," and "known" (§448, 267-268). Human law is opposed in all respects by the contrary power of "divine law" (§449, 268).

The family represents the moment of "immediacy" or "immediate consciousness of itself" in the form of "a natural ethical community [natürliches sittliches Gemeinwesen = the naturally ethical common essence]" (§450, 268*), which is located within the sphere of human law. There is a difference between nature and ethics. The family is ethical only in the sense that the natural relationship is also ethical "in the relation of the *individual* member of the Family to the *whole* Family as the Substance" (§451, 269). Because an ethical action is not merely accidental, the person, "or the individual *as such*," attains this universality when he is freed from his merely contingent reality in "*pure being, death*" (§452, 270).

This view of the family as motivated by the devotion of individuals to shared goals, influenced by the larger community, is unromantic and realistic. The idea that the individual attains universality in death is a variation of Solon's conviction (see §315) that we only know

who someone is after he is dead. There is a reciprocal relation between the natural death of the individual family member and the family's relation to that person. In death, the physical person is sacrificed for the end that is the ethical community. The family seeks to honor their own departed members in the final duty that is "the perfect *divine* law, or the positive

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ethical action toward the individual" (§453, 271). Human law is concerned with the really existing individual as a member of the family or people. Divine law is concerned with the same person insofar as he is beyond reality (*Wirklichkeit*.)

Consistent with the view that the truth lies in the nation, which is higher than either the individual or the family, Hegel holds that "the *community*," or "the higher . . . law," becomes real through the "government" (§455, 272*). Foreshadowing his discussion of civil society in the *Philosophy of Right*, he discerns an opposition between the family and the state. This leads to "systems of personal independence and property, of laws relating to persons and things" (§455, 272), that are intended to stabilize interpersonal relations. The remark, about these relations, that "government has from time to time to shake them to their core by war" (§455, 272) to bring about change seems perilously close to justifying war as intrinsically useful.

Divine law, which governs the family, includes the three familial relationships, between husband and wife, parents and children, and brothers and sisters. In describing the relation between husband and wife as illustrating mutual recognition, where "one consciousness immediately recognizes itself in another, and in which there is knowledge of this mutual recognition" (§456, 273), we finally reach a positive model to resolve the struggle between master and slave. Perhaps unaware of Egyptian monarchistic practice, Hegel insists several times that "brothers and sisters . . . [who] are the same blood . . . do not desire each other" (§457, 274).

This observation leads to the conclusion that women are intrinsically ethical beings. If, in principle, brothers and sisters do not have sexual relations, it does not follow that "the feminine has, therefore [daher], as the sister, the highest *intuitive* awareness of what is ethical" (§457, 274*). The particular emphasis on nonbiological differences between men and women now seems dated. The view that women are concerned with the universal, since "the relationships of the woman are grounded, not on feeling, but on the universal" (§457, 274*), avoids reducing the cognitive capacity of the feminine sex to mere intuition. Yet it is false that women are not concerned with this husband or this child, but only with a husband in general or children in general. The reference to the importance of the loss of a brother for a sister reflects Hegel's reading of *Antigone* and foreshadows his own sister's suicide soon after his death. The outmoded view that women restrict their sphere of activity to the household leads to the idea that the brother is the mediating link

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between the family and society, the one through whom "Spirit becomes an individuality" (§458, 275). It leads as well to the further idea that the sister, or wife, is "the head of the household and the guardian of the divine law" (§459, 275). "Human law," which was described as superior to family law, "derives [ausgeht] in its living process from the divine" (§460, 276*).

Hegel now sums up his view of ethics through remarks on conscious individuals, who realize themselves ethically in their actions as universal ethical beings within the people as a whole and in the family. These are respectively the spheres of the man and the woman. In this content of the ethical world we see achieved those ends which the previous insubstantial forms of consciousness set themselves; what reason apprehended only as object has become self-consciousness, and what the latter possessed only within itself is now present as a true, objective reality. What observation knew as a given object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom [Sitte], but a reality which is at the same time the deed and the work of the one finding it. The individual seeking the pleasure of enjoying his individuality, finds it in the family, and the necessity in which that pleasure passes away is his own self-consciousness as a citizen of his nation [Voiks]. Or it is in knowing that the law of his heart is the law of all hearts, knowing the consciousness of the self as the acknowledged universal order; it is virtue, which enjoys the fruits of its sacrifice, which brings about what it sets out to do, viz. to bring forth the essence into the present [Gegenwart], and its enjoyment is this universal life. Finally, consciousness of the 'matter in hand achieves satisfaction in the real substance which contains and preserves in a positive manner the abstract moments of that empty category. That substance has, in the ethical powers, a genuine content that takes the place of the insubstantial commandments which sound Reason wanted to give and to know; and thus it gets an intrinsically determinate standard for testing, not the laws, but what is done. (§461, 276-277*)

Society is in principle a stable equilibrium (*Gleichgewicht*) disturbed by inequality (*Ungleichheit*). Inequality is restored by justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), specifically the justice of

human law "which brings back into the universal the element of being-for-self which has broken away from the balanced whole, viz. the independent classes [Stände] and individuals" (§462, 277). The extremes between the family and the nation, divine law and human law, are mediated in two ways: through the individual man, who brings together "the universal self-conscious Spirit" with "*unconscious* Spirit," and through the individual woman, who brings together "unconscious Spirit" and "the realm of conscious Spirit" (§463, 278).

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b. Ethical Action, Human and Divine Knowledge, Guilt and Destiny (Schicksal)

After ethical substance, or the social context, Hegel turns to the view of the human individual. He expands his approach to a person through the person's deeds, now restating in writing that "the deed [die Tat] is the *real self*" (§464, 279*). Obviously, action resulting in deeds occurs within society, or "the ethical realm," through conscious respect for "duty [Pflicht]" (§465, 279). Ethical tensions in society exist, since duties conflict. For Hegel, men and women represent human and divine forms of law, respectively. There is a further opposition between social reality and the ethical person, or "ethical consciousness," which, loosely following Aristotle, exhibits "immediate firmness of decision" based on "character" (§466, 280). The different, normative perspectives of human and divine law result in an "antithesis of the known and the unknown" (§467, 280). The ethical individual regards the world, not as an obstacle, but as an occasion to carry out duty, depicted as an "absolute right" to perform "the deed, the *shape* in which it *realizes* itself" (§467, 281*).

Since ethical actions can be evaluated from different perspectives, the individual, as a result of his deed, must bear "guilt" for a "*crime*," whereas "innocence is . . . merely non-action" (§468, 282). We are guilty, not because we fail to follow a series of ethical requirements, but since in obeying one ethical view we necessarily violate the requirements of other, conflicting views. Since we know who we are only in seeing what we have done, action is essentially tragic. With the Sophoclean plays in mind, Hegel remarks that "the son does not recognize his father in the man who has wronged him and whom he slays, nor his mother in the queen whom he makes his wife" (§469, 283). Worse still is when someone like Antigone, aware in advance of what will occur, "knowingly commits the crime" (§470, 284). The conflict between the ethical perspective and social reality, in virtue of which the individual knowingly suffers for his beliefs, is overcome through "the acknowledgment" that returns us to "the ethical frame of mind, which knows that nothing counts but right" (§471, 284). Conversely, the ethical individual is aware that it "*suffers no more evil than it inflicts*" (§472, 285*) since the clash of opposing views necessarily results in destruction.

Conflict between two ethical perspectives opposes "ethics and self-consciousness with unconscious Nature and its contingency" as well as "divine and human law" (§473, 285). This conflict is illustrated by the

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child who, in leaving the family, belongs both to it and to the community. It is further illustrated by two brothers quarreling over possessions, who come into conflict with the state that destroys them both. On a deeper level, the victory over the family through the repression of individuality signifies the conflict between conscious human law and unconscious divine law. Although in society, human law effectively dominates, hence dominating divine law, the roots of positive human law lie in unconscious divine law. "The public Spirit has the root of its power in the nether world [Unterwelt]" (§474, 287*).

The tension between different, competing ethical perspectives is manifest in the individual in whom "the movement of human and divine law finds its necessity expressed"; and in the real life of the nation, or "community," that only maintains itself "by suppressing this spirit of individuality" (§475, 288), on which it depends in time of war. Now appearing to celebrate the positive aspect of war, if not war itself, Hegel contends that the freely acting ethical individual acts authentically "in war as that which preserves the whole" (§475, 289). His analysis is based on the perceived conflict between different ethical perspectives. In closing this section, he remarks with great insight that this conflict is present throughout social reality. In everything that we do, nature influences ethics. Reality reveals "the

contradiction and the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself" (§476, 289).

c. Legal Status (*Rechtszustand*)

After the conflict between human and divine law, Hegel studies human law, whose principle is "equality, wherein each like all count as persons" (§477, 290*). Legal equality does not concern the particular ethical individual but personality (*Persönlichkeit*) isolated from the social context, or ethical substance that is no more than "an *abstract* universality" (§478, 290). In leaving behind "ethical substance," the result is that "what for Stoicism was only the abstraction of an intrinsic reality is now an actual world" (§479, 290*). For the legal individual attains no more than abstract status. Developing the analogy, the entire development earlier seen to lead away from stoicism is recapitulated in "modern legal right," more precisely in a tension between skepticism, which is concerned to deny cognitive claims without asserting any of its own, and "the formalism of legal right," which is similarly "without a peculiar content of its own" (§480, 291).

Obviously, a strictly legal approach to the conditions of personhood

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cannot grasp the social individual. In illustration, Hegel obscurely invokes a Hobbesian form of the master-slave relation, historically illustrated in ancient Rome, in which the relation of the law to individuals is depicted as an opposition between the king and his subjects. He contrasts the monarch, or so-called "absolute person, who embraces within himself the whole of existence—the person for whom there exists no superior Spirit," in effect a form of the master, or "lord of the world"—with the multiplicity of individuals, or personal atoms "raging madly against one another in a frenzy of destructive activity" (§481, 292). A legal code, or the monarch, which is obviously no substitute for ethical substance, is said to be a "destructive power he exercises against the self of his subjects" (§482, 293). We are meant to conclude that the law, or the so-called lord of the world, fails to unite or otherwise bring together subjects who remain divided in their atomicity. In comparing the situation to unhappy consciousness divided against itself, Hegel insightfully notes a basic tension in the ethical conception of the self. For when it receives acknowledgment in the conception of the legal person, it is no longer united but effectively "self-alienated [*sich entfremdet*]" (§483, 294*).

B. Self-Alienated Spirit. Culture (*Bildung*)

The examination of ethics focused on the status of the subject in modern society. It culminates in discussion of the modern individual, who belongs simultaneously to the family, to civil society, and to the state; who is both an ethical subject and has legal status; and who is divided against himself, or self-alienated. The reflexive form of the verb "to alienate oneself" (*sich entfremden*) preserves Hegel's anti-Cartesian emphasis on the active subject that he finds in Kant and more strongly in Fichte. He makes use of his conception of self-alienation to work out a highly original theory of culture.

It is useful to describe the meaning that Hegel gives to "culture" in this passage. There is a difference between the German words *Kultur* and *Bildung*. The former, which Hegel employs only rarely, means "culture" in a narrow sense that is restricted to "the ensemble of spiritual and artistic forms of expression of a people, including art, science, and so on." He infrequently uses the term to refer to the difference between those who are educated and those who are not. The latter, which Hegel uses often, is a wider term, whose extension includes society in general.

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Bildung, which is here translated as "culture," also means "formation, shape, and education." It is immediately based on *bilden*, "to produce, to make, to bring forth, to create; to found, to set up, to form, to shape; to be; to provide culture [*Bildung*]; to instruct and to educate." It is based more distantly on *Bild*, which means variously "picture, image, portrait, idea, metaphor," and so on. The etymology suggests that culture, which offers a picture or image of human being's self-alienation, of the record of our actions, also offers a way of

knowing ourselves. In his writings, Hegel sometimes uses "Bildung" more narrowly. In the *Philosophy of Right*, in reference to "Bildung," he says that as thought it is consciousness of the single item in the form of universality.³¹ This is roughly the idea that occurs in "Sense-Certainty" in the *Phenomenology*. Yet remarks on government, good and bad, wealth, and so on, suggest that he takes "Bildung" here in the wider sense to include virtually anything concerning human society, including the natural sciences and philosophy.

The analysis of culture in general continues the account of human self-realization in activity. Culture in all its many forms exhibits the varied manifestation of human being. Hegel's brilliant appropriation and expansion of the Fichtean idea of alienation³² illustrate the now-familiar idealist thesis through, the specific claim that our surrounding cultural world is a self-alienated extension of ourselves. There is a more than vaguely Fichtean echo in Hegel's rich discussion of culture (depicted as what stands over and opposes the subject) as nothing more than a human product. For Hegel, the relation between the human subject and the external social world as "the negative of self-consciousness" is in fact a concealed relation of the human subject to itself; for "this world is . . . a spiritual essence [geistiges Wesen], . . . the interfusion of being and individuality, . . . the work of self-consciousness" as well as "an alien reality already present and given" (§484, 294*). Conversely, this general process is one in which the individual objectifies and alienates himself. For "this acting and becoming [Tun und Werden] whereby the substance becomes actual is the alienation [Entfremdung] of the personality" (§484, 294-295*).

Since human culture is the product of human beings, then "sub-stance is in this way *Spirit*, the self-conscious unity of the self and essence" (§485, 295*). The self-alienation of people in the cultural world yields a complex duality between intention and its realization, between the world that we experience and what lies beyond and makes it possible. We can further say, in a way recalling the account of the inverted world, that the individual, or "Spirit constructs for itself [sich ausbildet], not

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merely a world, but one that is doubled, divided and opposed" (§486, 295*).

If we take "what is *present*" as having "the significance of only an objective reality," then, "so far as it is actual, its essence is something other than its own actuality" (§486, 295). The ethical world divides into the opposing realms of human and divine law, which Hegel has earlier examined in *Faith and Knowledge*. This opposition now reappears within culture as the distinction between faith (*Glaube*), which is concerned with the beyond, and pure insight (*Einsicht*), which completes culture in the here and now.

In view of Hegel's deep commitment to rationalism, his realistic but negative judgment on the ☒ **Enlightenment** ☒ is sobering. The ☒ **Enlightenment** ☒, which historically reacted against religion to free knowledge from faith (which is concerned with "the alien realm of essence lying in the beyond"), completes human self-alienation. The ☒ **Enlightenment** ☒ realizes itself, both through "the unknowable absolute essence" of religion and through its direct opposite, or "the principle of utility" (§486, 296*) to which it leads. Both the ☒ **Enlightenment** ☒ form of reason as pure insight and its continuation as the French Revolution are finally self-stultifying. The ☒ **Enlightenment** ☒, which aims at knowledge, leads to what cannot be known (another term for the Kantian thing-in-itself); and, instead of insisting on principle, it turns to utility. Similarly, the French Revolution did not lead to the absolute freedom that it sought, but to its opposite, or absolute terror.

I. The World of Self-Alienated Spirit

Self-alienated spirit divides into the real world and the level of pure consciousness. The latter is a further world, which "Spirit," or human being, "constructs for itself in the Aether of pure consciousness," namely, in a further form of culture that "consists precisely in being conscious of two different worlds, and which embraces both" (§487, 297). In the latter respect, there is a distinction between faith, or a flight from the real world, and religion that concerns knowledge of absolute being, and there is a further distinction between faith and the concept, which are understood as opposites.

a. Culture and Its Realm of Actuality. Hegel analyzes the levels of culture and faith separately. His discussion of the latter, beginning with the now-familiar view of the world as produced by self-con-

scious individuals, is unusually convoluted and repetitious, even by his own expository standards, but also profound.

In the familiar caricature of idealism, supposedly illustrated by Fichte, the subject is the sole source of the world.³³ Probably no idealist, certainly no German idealist, not even the Irish philosopher Berkeley, ever held a view of this type. Hegel is not suggesting that human beings "create" nature in any sense. He is rather making the eminently sensible point that we must understand human culture as a human product. "The Spirit of this world is a spiritual essence that is permeated by a self-consciousness which knows itself, and knows the essence as an actuality confronting it" (§488, 297). Certainly, we realize ourselves in culture, where "the individual has validity [Gelten] and reality," since the individual's "true original nature and substance is the spirit of the alienation of his natural being" (§489, 298*). The individual's "culture [Bildung] . . . is the essential moment of *Substance* itself" (§490, 299) which, through action, leads to the actual world. The idea that "the self is only real as sublated" (§491, 299*) implies a distinction between human being and nature.

To look more closely at the process of alienation, in an obscure argument Hegel first examines substance as it is, namely, "simple Substance itself, considered in the immediate organization of its existent, still unspiritualized moments [noch unbegeisteten Momente]" (§492, 300*). He relies implicitly on the distinction between the levels of faith and reality in next distinguishing between thoughts on the level of pure consciousness "as having only an *implicit* being" and as objectified essences in real consciousness that have "an *objective* existence" (§493, 300-301). The simple thoughts of good and bad are "actual and present in actual consciousness" in "state power [Staatsmacht]," a form of central control that precedes government (*Regierung*) that is not yet a real state power; this is "the absolute situation [Sache] itself, in which for individuals their essence is expressed and their individuality is only consciousness of their universality" (§494, 301*).

The identification of state power and wealth refers to the political and economic dimensions that are central to social life. Hegel realistically remarks that state power is the foundation of everything that people do. Both state power and wealth are produced by everyone's work and activity. Sounding like Adam Smith, he says that when each individual works for himself, he also works for everyone. Writing about state power and wealth, he says that we see in the former what we are "implicitly" and in the latter what we are "explicitly" (§495, 302).

Our judgments about the political and economic dimensions of reality are subjective, based on how we relate to them. In what amounts to a version of Rousseau's idea of the general will as the will of all, Hegel suggests as a political standard that a person find his aspirations and goals reflected in political power. An individual "holds that object to be good, and to possess intrinsic being, in which it finds itself" (§496, 302) and conversely. In state power, the individual finds simple existence, but not individuality, or "its *intrinsic* being, but not what it explicitly is *for itself*" (§497, 303). In contrast, wealth is "the Good," and at least "*implicitly* universal well doing [Wohltun]" (§497, 303*).

Such judgments express how state power and wealth appear to the individual, "in the relation of itself to the actual" (§499, 305), not how they are in themselves. The noble individual, "which finds them of like nature to itself" (§500, 305), relates positively to state power in types of individual sacrifice, such as heroic service and virtue, as opposed to the ignoble individual, who relates negatively to state power. Such judgments are merely subjective. For they reflect "what these two essential realities are as *objects* for consciousness, not as yet what they are in and for themselves" (§502, 305).

In the first place, the relation of individuals to state power is one of personal sacrifice, or "the heroism of service" (§503, 306). This sacrifice transforms the mere idea into reality, since "the universal becomes united with existence in general" (§504, 306). There is an implicit distinction between a sacrifice, in which the individual merely goes through the motions, and one in which he fully identifies with a particular ideal represented in a particular state, which Hegel designates as government, or actual state power. If the individual is opposed to the power of the state, if the state does not adequately represent him, any sacrifice for it is limited. In that case, "the state power is not a self-consciousness" (§505, 306-307), hence less than a government, or an actual state power. In this or analogous situations, individuals are at best incompletely integrated into the state, with which they only

partially identify. In spite of discussion of general good, there is a basic division between the state and the "Spirit of the various estates," or classes, each of which "reserves to itself what suits its *own* best interest" (§506, 307). What is lacking is the real sacrifice of self, described as "the true sacrifice [Aufopferung] of being-for-self . . . solely that in which it surrenders itself as completely as in death, yet in this externalization no less preserves itself" (§507, 308*).

Now changing registers, Hegel argues that "this alienation takes

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place solely in *language* [in der *Sprache*]" (§508, 308).³⁴ In the real world, language concerns form, for instance, the form of law or of commands, whereas for faith as for speech mere form stands in for action. Hegel has in mind a view of the subject considered as an inactive, featureless being, whose existence for others is merely linguistic. As in "Sense-Certainty," so here the particular 'I' is manifested and also disappears in language. As concerns state power, noble individuals perform self-abnegation by sacrificing themselves, in a relation mediated through language, for the abstract universal known as the general good. Still lacking here is a more than external relation between the individual and state power, such as "the *actual* transference . . . of state power" to the individual, or, with respect to state power, "that it should be obeyed, not merely as the so-called 'general good', but as will" (§510, 310).

Since the state is content to flatter those who sacrifice for it, "the heroism of silent service becomes the heroism of flattery" (§511, 310). On this level, individuality is no more than "the language of their praise" (§512, 311). Although he apparently sacrifices himself, the noble individual, who is in fact a hypocrite, is concerned with himself. This has the effect of "rending [Zerreissen] the universal Substance" (§513, 312*). Like the unhappy consciousness, the noble individual is divided against himself. As a result, any distinction between noble and ignoble aspects disappears.

Instead of subordinating himself to the state, the individual subordinates the state, which becomes a form of wealth, to himself. "So enriched through universal power, self-consciousness exists as universal beneficence" (§514, 312*). Wealth, as Hegel acutely remarks, has an intrinsic status, or "*intrinsic being of its own*" (§515, 313). The wealth produced by the individual person becomes alien to him, since "what is alien is its own *being-for-self*" (§516, 313). For Hegel, whatever happens, self-consciousness remains unaffected. Yet like Marx, he maintains that since the product belongs to another, the worker is alienated from it. For "as regards the aspect of that pure reality which is its very own, viz. its own 'I', it sees that with respect to its innermost reality or its 'I' outside itself and belonging to another" (§517, 313*).

With great insight, Hegel draws the social consequences of the nascent industrial revolution. The price of the development of the means of production is that everything else in society is destroyed. As in the master-slave relation, social dissatisfaction offers a residual potential for social unrest. "Although this consciousness receives back from riches

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and supersedes the objectivity of its being-for-self, it . . . is conscious of being dissatisfied" (§518, 314*). Wealth provides independent and arbitrary power over others, and breeds arrogance. "In this arrogance which intends, through a meal, to have received another's 'I'-self and thereby acquired for itself the submission of that other's inmost essence, it overlooks the other's inner rebellion [Empörung]" (§519, 315*). Ever a social realist, Hegel was well aware of the socially destabilizing consequences due to the unequal distribution of social resources, particularly wealth, which was a main cause of the French Revolution. He concludes this paragraph in warning that in virtue of their social practices, the possessors of wealth, or as he says wealth itself, "are standing directly in front of this innermost abyss, before a bottomless depth"

Hegel regards the social tension resulting from the industrial revolution as leading to a rebellious rage, which is expressed in language. The base flattery, which is typical in dealing with wealth, is simply one-sided. The opposite is true of the language of those, who are about a situation of which Hegel says: "The language of disruption [*Sprache der Zerrissenheit*] is, however, the perfected language and the truly existent Spirit of this entire cultural world" (§520, 316*) Earlier, he argued that alienation occurs in language. Now he symmetrically argues that we return to ourselves out of alienation on the level of language. For, through

language, we take back the social world we have ourselves produced. "Here, then, we have available the Spirit of this real [realen] cultural world in its truth and aware of its concept" (§520, 316*).

The pure cultural world, which is divorced from the social context, is nothing but "this absolute and universal inversion [Verkehrung] and alienation of the actual world and of thought" (§521, 316). As in the inverted world, so here everything held to be true is its opposite. So-called true spirit unifies the opposites in the real world and the purely cultural world. Following Diderot's famous dialogue, "Rameau's Nephew," that so impressed Goethe, Hegel suggests that what we say about ourselves is "the inversion of all concepts and realities" (§522, 317*). Compared to the noble individual, the hypocrite has nothing to say, and should remain silent, or "taciturn" (§523, 318). Such an individual is badly placed to offer examples, since his "action stands opposed to the whole of the real world" (§524, 319). At best, such a person can be aware of his own confusion. All that is left is to become aware that it is vain since "the vanity of all *things* is its *own* vanity" (§526, 320).

What Hegel means is that such a person requires things, or power

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and wealth, for which it wins recognition that is merely a form of vanity. The things it obtains are bereft of "positive significance" (§526, 321). For when the real content is lost, the relation between the person and the social world is reduced to that between a pure subject, in effect a form of the Cartesian spectator, and a merely negative other, whose positive significance, or significance for human being, has disappeared.

b. Faith and Pure Insight. The detailed treatment of culture and its realm of actuality is followed by a more rapid account of faith (*der Glaube*) and pure insight, topics that were treated earlier in *Faith and Knowledge*. Under the heading of faith, or belief, Hegel simultaneously considers the difference between religion and philosophy and the epistemological transition between mere certainty and truth, which has been mentioned in connection to Descartes.

In his account "Faith and Pure Insight," Hegel turns from the real social world to what lies beyond it as "the unreal world of *pure consciousness*, or of *thought*" (§527, 321). He distinguishes between cognition of what is really given and what is only apparently given on the latter level. As for the Kantian thing-in-itself, the conscious individual, which is concerned with its own thoughts, knows them only—not as "picture-thought," as Miller translates *Vorstellung*—as a representation of what, as lying beyond actuality, is only thought but not known. In arguing that the social context is prior to faith that derives from it, Hegel anticipates the anthropological approach to religion as a projection of human qualities in the form of a divine being developed by his critic, Ludwig Feuerbach.³⁵

We are concerned here with religion as understood in opposition to the social context, "in the form in which it occurs in the social world" (§528, 322*) as mere belief, but not yet as taken for itself. In opposition to actuality, religion is merely faith, or "the pure consciousness of essence" (§529, 323*). Faith, which is defined through the rejection of actuality, relates to pure insight in roughly the same way as the inverted world relates to the world. As a flight from the real world, pure consciousness rejects, but also preserves, that world within it. Pure insight is correlated with the pure subject that is cognitively related to the real social world from which it is separated. Faith, on the contrary, has content but no insight.

Pure insight is similar to certainty that is not yet truth. As pure consciousness of inner being, faith is a thought of what lies beyond it, as something imagined, or as "a supersensible world which is essentially

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an '*other*' in relation to self-consciousness" (§529, 324). Faith and pure insight have in common a relation to the real world. Each leaves "the actual world of culture" (§530, 324) behind. For the believer, faith turns on so-called absolute being that is realized as "*being-for-others*" that is clearly identifiable as "an actual, self-sacrificing absolute essence" (§532, 325). Considered in abstraction from social reality, these are only "immutable eternal Spirits" (§533, 325).

The believer has an ambiguous attitude toward the real world in which absolute being is realized but that is otherwise without value. Such a person relates to "this its own actuality as something worthless" (§534, 325). Pure insight that is conversely concerned with the concept alone as real is "really the true relation in which Faith here appears" (§535, 326).

For Hegel, the **Enlightenment**, which understands itself through its opposition to religion (namely, through the antithesis between reason and faith), is merely another, unrealized form of religion, or faith. The believer, who possesses self-realizing, pure insight, "which is not yet realized" (§537, 326), intends to realize his belief in the social world as best he can. In a complex paragraph, Hegel maintains that what he calls pure insight finally comes down to the motto that the best way to realize our beliefs is for each person to be as he is in himself: "reasonable [vernünftig]" (§537, 328).

II. The **Enlightenment** (Die Aufklärung)

The world of self-alienated spirit is the sociohistorical world in which we live, which we produce through our practical activity, through which we realize ourselves, which limits us, and which we imperfectly cognize through faith and insight. In turning to the

Enlightenment, Hegel turns from a general examination of ways that human beings relate to the world and to themselves to scrutiny of a particular historical movement that flourished in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Europe. His remarks about the **Enlightenment** period, in particular about the interval of Absolute Freedom and Terror engendered by the French Revolution, reflect a deep philosophical grasp of historical events.

Pure insight and faith are opposing forms of pure consciousness that derive from the real world. The former is characterized as an activity "directed against the impure intentions and inverted [verkehrten] in-

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sights of the real world" (§538, 328*). As pure, it has "no special insight into the world of culture" (§539, 328), with respect to which it functions on a merely formal, or secondary, level. Yet it passes judgment on literally everything. Hegel ironically remarks about pure insight, "By this simple means it will clear up the confusion of this world" (§540, 328). For Hegel, the possessor of pure insight transcends merely personal interest, and accompanying vanity, in universal (*allgemeine*) insight, whose genuine activity consists in opposing faith. Yet pure insight, like faith or pure reason, is separated from the world. Hegel takes pains to expose the shallow and ultimately destructive way that it, as a deficient, incomplete form of spirit, grasps social reality. Like the Kantian theory of morality, in which moral insight is accompanied by good intentions, pure insight is unable or mainly unable to realize itself.

a. *The Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition.* Hegel takes pure insight as typical of the **Enlightenment**. Superstition represents a type of religion that, from his Lutheran perspective, at times seems close to Roman Catholicism, or the religion of the priests criticized earlier in the passage on unhappy consciousness. He studies the **Enlightenment** as pure insight in two sections: initially, in an examination of the struggle of the **Enlightenment** with superstition, which is understood as a struggle between pure insight and faith, and then in an examination of pure insight as such.

Hegel usually emphasizes the practical over the theoretical and the concrete over the abstract. Here the most obvious historical references are to Diderot's dialogue and to a prize essay proposed by Frederick the Great. Hegel distinguishes two forms of insight: pure insight that, like pure reason, or observing reason, is transcendent to what it desires to know and insight that is immanent. The first moment of the discussion shows that although the **Enlightenment** understands itself as the antithesis of religious belief, as pure insight it is just what it opposes. At the limit, the pure form of insight that is the cognitive peak of the **Enlightenment** simply misunderstands faith from which it finally cannot be separated or even distinguished.

The **Enlightenment**³⁶ is often held to culminate in Kant, the apostle of pure reason. In a famous essay, "What Is **Enlightenment**?"³⁷ Kant suggests that the **Enlightenment** aimed at the capacity for the individual to think freely, in effect according to the tenets of the critical philosophy. Hegel's analysis is in part directed against Kant, even if he is not named. Another target is faith, for which Kant famously limited reason.

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According to Hegel, the pure insight spread by the **Enlightenment** is a negative form of consciousness. The superiority of pure insight to other, negative forms of consciousness lies in its self-certainty that leads it into conflict with faith. For pure insight

"knows the pure *self* of consciousness to be absolute, and enters into dispute with the pure consciousness of the absolute essence of all reality" (§541, 329).

Faith and pure insight are directly opposed. For Hegel, in basic ways the **Enlightenment** fails to understand either faith that it opposes or itself. He reflects the well-known **Enlightenment** antipathy to religion in pointing out that, from the perspective of pure insight, faith is "a tissue of superstitions, prejudices and errors" and "the masses are subject to the deception of a *priesthood*" that further conspires with "despotism" (§542, 530). Interestingly, in view of his critique of Kantian morality as failing to take into account individual factors, he sees the **Enlightenment** itself as squarely aimed against "insight devoid of will which has no separable individuality of its own" (§543, 330), in short, against a merely abstract view of the world. In reaction, pure insight is concerned to enlighten simple, unreflective individuals, roughly what Marxists sometimes call consciousness raising. As concerns absolute being, or faith, pure insight adopts both positive and negative attitudes. From a positive perspective, it is like faith, for which absolute being is indeed absolute; but from a negative perspective, it differs in the sense that God remains to be realized.

Hegel expresses his disapproval of the first aspect of pure insight in comparing it variously to "a perfume" and to a silent but incurable "infection" (§545, 331) that becomes known only when it is too late to do anything about it. For pure insight, as a deficient form of the concept, is ultimately fatal for Spirit. Pure insight further manifests itself through its opposition to faith, "as a sheer uproar and a violent struggle with its antithesis" (§546, 332).

Hegel now studies the relation of pure insight to faith, or "its *negative* attitude to that 'other' which it finds confronting it" (§547, 332). In virtue of their negative attitudes, as a result of which they are unable to recognize themselves in otherness, pure insight and its accompanying intention (*Absicht*) turn into the negative of themselves. For pure insight becomes "untruth and unreason" and intention, as the negative of pure intention, becomes "a lie and insincerity of purpose" (§547, 332).

Pure reason "imagines that what it is attacking is something other than itself" (§548, 333). Yet nothing rational can lie outside reason, since

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what it sees as its other is itself. Hence, its fulfillment lies in understanding the reason of the objective external world in "an insight which recognizes the absolute negation of itself to be its own real existence, or an insight whose Concept recognizes its own self" (§548, 333*).

This distinction between pure insight and insight undermines the opposition between insight and faith. The **Enlightenment** generally relates to its object through pure insight, or pure thought, which, "not recognizing itself therein, declares it to be error" (§549, 334). Yet what it takes to be an error is not different from the **Enlightenment** itself. Like faith, the **Enlightenment** takes for its object a "pure essence of its own consciousness" (§549, 334). Hence pure insight and faith share the same basic movement through which consciousness produces its object. For faith, this object is not an abstract essence but rather the unity of the abstract essence and self-consciousness as the "Spirit of the community [*Gemeinde*]" (§549, 335) that only comes into being through consciousness. Hegel contends that the **Enlightenment** is "foolish" with regard to its negative judgment of faith that, from the side of faith, is rejected as "not knowing what it is saying" (§550, 335). It is further inconsistent and even self-deceptive in maintaining one standard for faith and another for itself. For "what it directly asserts to be alien to consciousness" in criticizing faith "it directly declares to be the *inmost nature of consciousness itself*" (§550, 335) in referring to itself.

Hegel further considers "how faith experiences the **Enlightenment**" (§551, 336), beginning with the "negative attitude to the absolute essence of the believing consciousness" (§552, 336). Religion correctly regards itself as misunderstood from the **Enlightenment** perspective of pure insight. In the first place, for pure insight, the objects of faith are merely what is represented (*Vorgestellten*, from *Vorstellung*). Yet since faith is not a form of sense-certainty, the **Enlightenment** tendency (anticipating reductive Marxist analyses, such as Karl Kautsky's)³⁸ to take religious representations to be no more than "a piece of stone" or again "a block of wood" (§552, 337), and so on, is mistaken. For what is revered through faith cannot merely be assimilated to a "temporal, sensuous thing" (§553, 337), even if it is also that.

Second, there is "the relation of faith to the knowing consciousness of this essence" (§554, 337*). For the religious individual, this is an immediate relation that, as Hegel notes, is mediated through consciousness. Faith is simply misunderstood to base its claims to

religious certainty on historical evidence. When faith appeals to such forms of evidence, it has already been corrupted. In fact, the religious individual

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has a simpler relation "to its absolute object, a pure knowing of it which does not mix up letters, paper, and copyists in its consciousness of absolute Essence [Wesen]" (§554, 338*).

Finally, there is the relation of the conscious individual to God, or to the absolute being, "as an acting [ein Tun]" (§555, 338*). The rational individual, who acts generally, hence denies his own individuality. From the **Enlightenment** perspective, it appears simply foolish for the believer to engage in self-abnegation, to give up personal enjoyment and pleasure to realize religious ends. Pure insight that undertakes similar actions in effect denies itself. For "it denies directly purposive action" as well as "the intention of proving itself freed from the Ends of a separate individual existence" (§556, 340) on which such action depends.

Hegel has so far considered the **Enlightenment** only negatively, as a way to detect errors. He now considers its positive content, or truth. He attributes to it a broadly humanist perspective, that is, a general approach to everything "as *finiteness*, as *human essence and representation*" in which God or "absolute essence becomes like a vacuum to which no determinations, no predicates, can be attributed" without falling into "superstition [Aberglauben]" (§557, 340*). In denying the very idea of absolute essence, or God, as intrinsically empty, the **Enlightenment** is committed to a nominalistic view in which there are individuals and things in relation, "the *singleness* in general of consciousness and of all being" (§558, 340) but nothing else. Finally, there is the relation of the individual person to absolute essence, which, from the **Enlightenment** perspective, is that of the individual to an empty void beyond experience, or of the real world to the beyond. For Kant, appearances, or objects of experience, depend in some unclarified manner on objects of thought that are not and cannot be given in experience. In an implicit reference to this Kantian doctrine, Hegel maintains that when **Enlightenment** thinkers go beyond experience, "the sensuous is . . . now related *positively* to the Absolute as to the *in-itself* [Ansich]" (§559, 341).

For Hegel, the two ways that the **Enlightenment** understands the relation of the finite human individual to absolute essence, or the in-itself, are equivalent, since "everything is *useful*" (§560, 342). At this point, truth has been replaced by utility. From this humanist perspective, human being is good, and human reason functions to prevent excess. Its relation to religion is similarly useful, in fact most useful, since "it is pure utility itself" (§561, 343) in which what things are is merely reduced to their utility. The upshot of this analysis is that the **Enlightenment** leads to a utilitarian attitude toward religion and everything else.

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Yet faith rejects the **Enlightenment** rejection of faith as well as its tendency to transform all relations into utilitarian ones.

This insight into absolute Essence which sees nothing in it but just absolute Essence, the Etre suprême, or the void—this intention to regard everything in its immediate existence as having intrinsic being or as good, and finally, to regard the relation of the individual consciousness to absolute Essence, religion, as exhaustively expressed in the Concept of utility¾ all this is for faith utterly detestable. (§562, 343*)

Against the **Enlightenment** that distorts it, faith asserts "the right of absolute *self-identity* [Sichselbstgleichheit] or of pure thought." The **Enlightenment** asserts human rights against faith since "the wrong it commits is the right to be *non-identical* [Ungleichheit]" (§563, 343), parenthetically, the basis of any secular humanism. From its own perspective, the **Enlightenment's** attack against religion is not unfairly but fairly brought. It rests on "principles which are implicit in faith itself" (§564, 344). The **Enlightenment** turns the principles of religion against faith in maintaining the anthropological claim that God is a product of consciousness.

Yet, as Hegel ironically remarks, the **Enlightenment** that criticizes religion as being unaware of itself is "just as little enlightened [aufgeklärt] about itself" (§565, 344). In effect the **Enlightenment** reproduces the relation of the individual to the absolute, "a right which the latter himself [i.e., the believer] concedes" (§567, 346), in its view of religious objects as merely stone and wood, hence as independent of the subject. Hegel extends the parallel in contending that "the same is the case with the *ground* of knowledge" (§568, 346). For faith that focuses on absolute essence and the **Enlightenment** that focuses on the merely contingent are equally one-sided. **Enlightenment** criticism of faith for rejecting property is matched by the religious retention of property. From the **Enlightenment**

perspective, the religious practice of discarding a single thing, "to throw away *one* possession" (§570, 347) to show that one is liberated from possessions, is insufficient.

Probably thinking of Kantian morality, for which the good will is the only thing good in itself,³⁹ Hegel asserts that **Enlightenment** thought stresses mere intention over its realization. For "it places the essential factor in the *intention*" (§571, 348). Unlike faith, the **Enlightenment** already possesses within itself, or within thought, that for which religion only yearns. Yet this merely destructive critique has the effect of denying the believer "the perception of the sleeping con-

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sciousness living purely in nonconceptual thoughts [begriffslosen Gedanken] (§572, 348*) in favor of the waking consciousness in the real world.

Religion, which loses its content, is converted in this way into an endless yearning. The perspectives of faith that cannot realize itself and the **Enlightenment** that does not do so turn out to be the same. "Faith has, in fact, become the same as **Enlightenment**, viz. consciousness of the relation of what is in itself finite to an Absolute without predicates, an Absolute unknown and unknowable" (§573, 349). The **Enlightenment** attitude is satisfied with this result. Yet the religious attitude, which is typified by an unfulfilled yearning, that is, the same yearning already described in "Unhappy Consciousness," is dissatisfied.

b. *The Truth of the Enlightenment*. Hegel, who has so far sketched in some detail the struggle of the **Enlightenment** against religion that it regards as mere superstition, now addresses the truth of this movement more briefly. He has already shown that religious belief is similar to the **Enlightenment** perspective. He now uses this similarity to criticize the **Enlightenment**.

As for religion, for pure insight action takes place only on the level of mind. For this is the way that "pure insight, or insight that is implicitly Concept, actualizes itself" (§574, 350*). An **Enlightenment** thinker, say, Kant, postulates an abstract concept, such as the pure will that is good in itself. Such a postulated entity, which exists merely as a distinction within consciousness, is "the *pure Thing*, or the absolute Essence [Wesen], which has no further determination whatever" (§574, 350*). Pure thought concerns pure essence that, like the God of faith, only is in pure thought as what lies beyond the finite, self-conscious subject. For as was already shown in the discussion of sense-certainty, "pure absolute Essence is only in pure thought, or rather it is pure thought itself" (§576, 351*).

Pure essence is nothing more than thought since, like the featureless God resulting from the **Enlightenment** critique of religion, it has no qualities. It is defined only negatively, like "*pure matter [Materiel]*" (§577, 351) that is never experienced but merely understood as what is left over when we abstract from sensuous being. To call it either "absolute essence" or "matter," as did materialists in the **Enlightenment** movement, such as Helvétius or D'Holbach, is to say the same thing. For "the two, as we saw, are absolutely the same Concept" (§579, 352*). The religious and the **Enlightenment** perspectives, which differ only in

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their starting points, come to the same conclusion. Both are equally superficial. Neither grasps the idealist thesis (which is basic to Descartes's metaphysics and which recurs throughout the *Phenomenology* in a variety of different forms) to the effect "that being and thought are, *in themselves*, the same" (§578, 352), or again that "*thought is thinghood, or thinghood is thought*" (§578, 352).

Hegel has been arguing that the **Enlightenment** criticism of religion reduces it to mere utility. Turning this argument around, he now argues that the truth of the **Enlightenment** lies in utility. For "actuality—as an object for the actual consciousness of pure insight—is utility" (§579, 353*) and "it is in Utility [*Nützlichkeit*] that pure insight completes its realization and has itself for its *object*" (§580, 353*). In a word, we relate to things through their utility for us.⁴⁰ Faith remains dissatisfied, since it is never finally actualized through the union of human being and God. Yet through utility, through the realization of its intention in the form of an object, the human individual reaches satisfaction. In utility, reality and intrinsic being come together in the form of the object that is transparent to reason and that is appropriated for human ends.

The Useful is the object in so far as self-consciousness sees through it and has in it the certainty of its individual self, its enjoyment (its being-for-self); self-consciousness sees into the object, and this insight contains the true essence of the object, something to be seen through [ein Durchschautes], or to be for an 'other'. (§581, 355*)

Now linking the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ form of reason to knowing, Hegel again insists on the importance of acting in the external world. For when the person knows himself in and through the object, the subject knows itself as it exists. "This insight is thus itself true knowing, and self-consciousness has equally directly the universal certainty of itself, its *pure consciousness*, in this relationship in which, therefore, truth as well as presence and *actuality* are united" (§581, 353*).

III. Absolute Freedom and Terror

Kant, who was sympathetic to the series of events known collectively as the French Revolution,⁴¹ found no place for it in his theoretical framework. Hegel's attitude toward the Revolution is complex. He was an early enthusiast of the Revolution but was later sharply critical of its failure to achieve universal freedom, the same principle that he later made central to his theory in the *Philosophy of Right*. He closes

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this part of the discussion with a brief but very important account of the French Revolution.

"Terror" (*Schrecken*) is a precise allusion to the particular part of the revolutionary period stretching from the fall of the Girondins (31 May 1793) to the fall of Robespierre on the 9th of Thermidor (27 July 1794). Robespierre, who instituted a reign of terror in France through the Comité du salut public that he headed, was known as l'Incorruptible because of his great moral purity. He wanted to establish a rule of virtue. The early Hegel is often regarded as a liberal. Yet in an early letter to Schelling, he distanced himself from the excesses of Jacobin politics in criticizing "the complete ignominy of Robespierre's party."⁴²

The great French Revolution that led to the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, overthrowing the Bourbon dynasty and revealing the fragility of political institutions, still remains, some two centuries later, as possibly the single most important political event of modern times. When the Revolution broke out, Kant, who was sixty-five years old, had nearly completed his life's work. He is the last great prerevolutionary philosopher. Fichte, the first great postrevolutionary philosopher, was committed to defending the French Revolution against its detractors, even against Napoleon, the nameless one whom, he believed, betrayed it. Like the other post-Kantian idealists, Hegel is deeply concerned, perhaps more than Fichte or any other philosopher, with the historical significance of the French Revolution.⁴³

Hegel's discussion draws attention to the link between the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ concern with unfettered reason, the practical effort at the self-realization of reason in the French Revolution, and the disutilitarian consequences of that effort. The latter are visible in the failure to achieve absolute freedom and the descent into terror that is its antithesis. In the *Republic*, Plato famously argues for the political role of philosophy, or reason in politics. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel construes Plato's *Republic* as an interpretation of Greek ethical life.⁴⁴ In criticizing the transformation of the Jacobin effort to secure political freedom into terror, Hegel implicitly rejects as impractical the Platonic view of politics.

Interest in utility turns into a practical concern with "*absolute freedom*" (§582, 356). This is the consequence of utility (where the human subject knows that its "essence and actuality are consciousness's knowledge of *itself*"), leading to the views that "all reality is solely spiritual" and that "world is simply its will, and this is a general will" (§584, 356-357*). Like the Kantian moral subject, the individual considers himself as wholly free and the principle of his action as binding on everyone.

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For each person embodies what Hegel following Rousseau calls "a real general will, the will of all individuals as such" (§584, 357). In rare revolutionary moments, as Sartre notes,⁴⁵ all individuals consciously share the same social vision. In such moments, there is a direct continuity between the individual will and the real general will of all individuals. In a passage influenced by Rousseau and the language of the French Revolution, Hegel writes that the real universal will grasps all spheres as the essence of this will, and therefore can only realize itself in a work which is a work of the whole. In this absolute freedom, therefore, all social groups or classes which are spiritual spheres into which the whole is articulated are abolished; the individual consciousness that belonged to such a sphere, and willed and fulfilled itself in it, has sublated its limitation; its purpose is the general purpose, its language universal law, its work the universal work. (§585, 357*)

Hegel, who has in mind the French Revolution, argues that its intention, although valuable, was self-stultifying. From the perspective of absolute freedom, individuals are constrained, not by the objective external world, but only by themselves. It follows that "the object and the *difference* have here lost the meaning [Bedeutung] of *utility*, the predicate of all real being" (§586, 357*). The only distinction is that between the individual and the universal. In an ironic passage, Hegel describes the *Etre suprême*, or supreme being, a sort of natural religion or deist cult, instituted in revolutionary France on May 7, 1794 (18^e floréal, an II), as merely vacuous. In a revolutionary situation, when all social divisions have been abolished, all that remains is a reciprocal relation between "the form of *universality* and of *personal* consciousness" (§587, 358), in which the individual acts as the representative of the general will.

Since there is no social structure in which it could be realized, consciousness comes down to "an interaction of consciousness with itself" (§588, 358*). What is lacking is the possibility for human beings to realize their human freedom in the social structures that have been destroyed. If Rousseau's universal will as the will of all is the standard, then clearly the revolutionary individual does not find himself reflected either "in this universal work of absolute freedom as existing Substance" or "in its real deeds" (§589, 359*). Hegel, who regards freedom as the goal of human history, renders a very bleak assessment of the French experiment. "Universal freedom, therefore, can bring forth neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action; it is merely the fury of disappearance [Verschwindens]" (§589, 359*).

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Hegel holds that we achieve freedom only in the state. He attributes the inability to realize universal human freedom to "the freedom and individuality of actual self-consciousness itself" (§590, 359). As an isolated being, the revolutionary individual, who is opposed to the state that it destroys, exists only for itself. The result of universal freedom is a merely meaningless death "with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water" (§591, 360).

From his familiar Rousseauist perspective, Hegel is similarly critical of revolutionary government. "It is merely the *victorious* faction" that, since by definition it fails to instantiate the general will that is the political criterion of legitimacy, points to "the direct necessity of its overthrow" (§591, 360). Like the similarly abstract Kantian moral subject, the revolutionary, who is not immersed in, but is rather opposed to, society, learns that "*in itself*, it is just this *abstract self-consciousness*" (§592, 361). Such an individual is a source of "*negation*," or "*difference*" that develops into "*actual difference*" (§593, 361) in the social world. Since it lacks the reciprocal relation between the concrete human being, who is set in the social world, and the real world in which alone social realization occurs, it cannot succeed.

Hegel, who holds that the revolutionary experience is essentially a waste, describes it, in terms similar to those he used for death of the individual, as "meaningless death, the sheer terror of the negative that has nothing positive, nothing filling [Erfüllendes] in itself" (§594, 362*). The positive aspect is that, as a result of the terrible political upheaval, human beings become aware of themselves as abstract but as really moral agents. The postrevolutionary individual knows himself as universal will, understood as "a pure knowing or willing" (§594, 363*). In other words, the "*pure knowing as essence* is the universal will" (§594, 363*). Yet this overcomes the "antithesis between the universal and the individual will" as a result of which human freedom, instead of being destructive, becomes constructive, in the new shape that Hegel calls "*moral Spirit*" (§595, 363).

C. Spirit Certain of Itself. Morality

Morality, the last main part of Spirit, has already been studied through remarks on the Kantian view in the chapter on reason. Hegel now returns to this theme, from a perspective enriched by the experience of the French Revolution, when the postrevolutionary indi-

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vidual is confident of embodying the universal will, to study concrete illustrations of the Kantian theory.

We have learned in the analysis of spirit that the "individual" realizes itself in "the ethical world" that, accordingly, is "its truth" (§596, 364). The abstract concept of the legal person

was filled out on the levels of culture and faith. It finally culminated in the experience of the French Revolution that announced, but failed to realize, absolute freedom. Yet through the revolutionary experience, the antithesis between the individual and the social world is overcome. Referring to the result of the French Revolution, Hegel writes that through the completed alienation, through the highest abstraction, Substance becomes for Spirit at first the universal will, and finally Spirit's own possession. Here, hence, knowledge appears at last to have become completely identical with its truth; for its truth is this very knowledge and any antithesis between the two sides has vanished. (§596, 364*)

On this level, what the individual knows and social reality are one and the same, since "for self-consciousness . . . its knowledge is the *Substance* itself" (§597, 364). Unlike prior stages, the individual is directly present in the social world. Like Michel Foucault, who famously holds that the concept of human being came into being relatively recently,⁴⁶ Hegel contends that our concept of subjectivity results from the revolutionary situation. In destroying the ancien régime, human being finally demonstrates that the subject "is all *reality*, and this reality *is* only as knowledge" (§598, 365). In knowing, we grasp what is rational in the object. The practical importance of this theoretical point is that through knowing we are free. In suggesting that this "knowledge" of its freedom "is its substance and goal and only content" (§598, 365), Hegel implies that it is only toward the end of the eighteenth century as an indirect result of the most traumatic political event of modern times, that we have become self-conscious in a full sense.

Hegel's historical approach to cognition leads him to relate our understanding of knowledge to historical circumstances. Earlier, he has distinguished between morality, roughly the Kantian, prerevolutionary view of practical activity, and ethics, equally roughly the postrevolutionary view, anticipated by Aristotle and later again taken up by Fichte, which he favors. The abstract, Kantian approach to morality gave rigorous philosophical expression to a widespread practical attitude. Hegel now provides a detailed critique directly aimed at the more popular forms of the Kantian approach as it existed in the wake of the French

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Revolution and still exists throughout society. Yet in the critique of the popular form of Kantian morality, he indirectly criticizes the Kantian view itself.

a. The Moral View of the World (*Die Moralische Weltanschauung*)

Hegel discusses three of the many possible moral attitudes in the postrevolutionary world with an eye toward an understanding of practical action, as motivated by principle, the general approach that was earlier seen to fail in the account of virtue and the way of the world. Kantian moral theory, which analyzes action in independence of expected consequences, features the effort to harmonize reason and nature.⁴⁷ Kant holds that we may hope for, but not aim at, happiness in morality.⁴⁸ With Kant in mind, Hegel begins with the type of person whose life is consciously centered on duty (*Pflicht*), "who knows duty as the absolute essence" (§599, 365*), without any reflection on the practical difficulties this involves. As for the virtuous individual earlier discussed, the "moral view of the world" concerns two opposing poles, the individual and nature, or "the relation between the absoluteness of morality and the absoluteness of Nature" (§600, 365). This relation presupposes the moral individual, whose life revolves around "duty" that it realizes in "its actuality and deed" (§601, 366*).

Closely following Kant, who postulates the existence of God as a condition of happiness for the moral person,⁴⁹ Hegel suggests that "the harmony of morality and happiness is *thought* as necessarily *being* or is *postulated* " (§602, 367*). This initial postulate leads to others, in fact "a whole circle of postulates" (including the requirement of overcoming the "conflict between Reason and sensuousness") that has the effect of postulating the harmony of morality and objective nature in some infinitely remote future as an endless or "*absolute task* " (§603, 368). If this could be realized, it would turn out to be the purpose of the world. The other postulate, which is practical in nature, is the harmony of morality and sensuous will in practical action that is the final aim of a person whose life focuses on acting according to duty.

In principle, Kantian moral theory requires an analysis of what each person should do from the perspective of the single individual. Yet in practice, the very idea of pure morality leads to a conflict between actuality and duty that cannot satisfactorily be resolved. Following Kant's emphasis on the moral will as purely autonomous,⁵⁰ Hegel indicates that

the moral person typified by "the *simple knowing and willing* of pure duty" (§605, 369) is not concerned with duties that are prescribed by general laws governing social relationships. Such other, impure duties as exist become binding only when they are regarded as duties by another moral individual, "who knows and wills them as duties" (§606, 370).

The Kantian individual is concerned with pure duty, whereas the non-Kantian is concerned with actually carrying out specific duties. If the first individual is concerned with morality, then the second is concerned with ethics. There is a difference in kind between pure duty that leads naturally to the idea of, in Hegel's words, a master and ruler of the world (or a Kantian God that harmonizes morality and nature) and real action directed toward a practical goal. For Kant, only someone who acts according to a pure will, without consideration of results, is worthy of happiness. Yet someone concerned with actuality necessarily acts imperfectly. For the real individual "in actual acting . . . is directed to actuality as such, and has it as the aim" (§607, 371*).

This leads to a clear paradox. Someone who ignores actuality but acts from pure duty is worthy; but such an individual is also unworthy, since its actions are, in Kantian terms, heteronymous, or "affected with sensuousness" (§608, 371). Yet someone who acts imperfectly acts according to duty (in the same way as someone who acts according to pure duty), hence shares the view of "the moral consciousness" that "postulates pure duty and actuality in a unity" (§610, 371*).

The difficulty of the moral worldview lies in its combination within a single consciousness of pure duty, what we must do, and actuality, the real theater of our actions. The moral individual, who is concerned with pure duty, thinks only in abstractions. He parenthetically converts the real problems of practice into theoretical questions. Such a person has a moral point of view that it does not "develop as its own Concept and make into an object"; since it is concerned merely with "what is *represented* [ein *vorgestelltes*]," it merely remains on the level of "representing [das *Vorstellen*]" (§611, 372*).

Hegel brings out this point in three stages in which objectivity is regarded as equivalent to moral self-consciousness. First, there is the real moral awareness, or "the Concept of moral self-consciousness" that demands that actuality conform to duty in a unity between actuality and "the moral subject, or moral, actual consciousness" (§642, 373-374). Second, there is a distinction between what we understand as duty and as actuality. This means in effect that actuality is not moral, or that there

is "a lack of harmony between the consciousness of duty and actuality" (§613, 373*). Finally, this dichotomy is overcome beyond actuality, "as a *beyond* of its actuality . . . that ought to be actual" (§614, 373*) within the idea of perfect morality. By this means, we arrive at the difference between actuality and duty. For duty that remains within the mind of the individual is not realized. "In this goal of the synthetic unity of the first two propositions, the self-conscious actuality as well as duty is posited as only a sublated moment" (§615, 373*).

b. Moral Displacement (Verstellung)

Verstellung (which Baillie renders as "dissemblance" and Miller renders as "dissemblance or duplicity"), while not quite a translator's nightmare, is difficult to render into English. The verb *verstellen* derives from *stellen* meaning "to put, place, set, stand, adjust, fix, arrange, ask [questions], put up [a bond], produce [a witness]," and so on. *Ver* is a broadly negative prefix that when combined with the root verb *stellen* as *verstellen* has such meanings as "to place, put or arrange otherwise, to close or make unavailable, to alter in such a way that another does not recognize, to depict oneself as other than one is, to be hypocritical [*heucheln*], to pretend [*vort ä uschen*], to simulate," and so on. The main meanings of *Verstellung* are "the placing of oneself otherwise [*sich verstellen*], hypocrisy [*Heuchelei*], and pretending [*Vortäuschung*]," all of which are ingredient in Hegel's account of the moral attitude. We can call it, since there is apparently no obviously adequate English term, 'moral displacement', which represents the opposite of the moral view of the world.

The moral view of the world exhibits the practical attitude of the individual, whose life centers on duty. Kant draws a distinction between pure practical reason, or the moral self-determination to act, and practical reason, or so acting.⁵¹ Yet insuperable difficulties arise in any attempt to act morally from a Kantian perspective. There is a fundamental contradiction

between the subject that in principle freely acts according to pure duty and one that in fact is confronted with an independent reality. Through "consciousness *itself*" the moral person "*consciously produces its object*" and everywhere "posits an *objective essence*" (§616, 374*). The contradiction lies in the fact that the object in question is both within and without consciousness. "The moral worldview is, therefore, in fact nothing other than the elaboration of this fundamental contradiction in its various aspects" (§617, 374*). We can only act

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freely to realize our moral duty if reality is reduced to a mental fiction. Yet as soon as we acknowledge independent reality, pure duty must go unrealized. In practice, the way to deal with this contradiction is to pass continually from a view of the subject that acts according to a conception of pure duty to one that is restricted by an independent reality, and conversely.

The moral view of the world that loosely corresponds to the Kantian moral theory and the effort to put it into practice are both hopelessly flawed. Kant makes the assumption of moral consciousness. Yet what is merely postulated cannot in fact be the case. The first postulate is "the harmony of morality and Nature" (§618, 375) for moral action to take place, which does take place. "Action . . . directly fulfills what was asserted could not take place, what was supposed to be merely a postulate, a mere beyond. Consciousness thus proclaims through its deed that it is not in earnest in making its postulate" (§618, 375). The postulate would only be serious if what is postulated could not be actual but could only be potential.

There is a basic inconsistency in the moral view of the world. Since what is postulated as a condition of morality in fact turns out to be the case, it should not be postulated at all. Although real morality requires moral action, there is a displacement in the transition from theory to practice, or from purpose to reality. "The real moral consciousness, however, is an acting; therein consists the reality of its morality. But in acting itself [Handeln] that situation [Stellung] is directly displaced [verstellt]" (§618, 375*).

A similar series of difficulties arises in respect to "action" through the obvious distinction between what the individual does, "a deed of the *individual* consciousness," and the avowed "purpose of Reason as the universal, all-embracing purpose, . . . a final purpose beyond the content of this individual deed . . . altogether beyond anything actually done" (§619, 375-376). If, like Kant, we take pure duty as central to morality, then in virtue of the postulate of the harmony of morality and nature, "moral action itself is ruled out" (§620, 376). For what is postulated is not realized. Since each aspect of morality is fraught with tension, clearly the moral individual is "not, strictly speaking, in earnest with *moral* action" (§621, 377).

These difficulties arise on the assumption of the first postulate, concerning the harmony of morality and nature. The second postulate, featuring the practical harmony of morality and the sensuous, generates similar difficulties. For the moral individual must act in independence

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of sensuous purposes. Such impulses, through which individuals are realized, ought not to be suppressed but brought into harmony with reason, as postulated. This leads to a situation in which the moral individual is "both the *activity* of this pure purpose, and also the consciousness of rising above sense-nature, of being mixed up with sense-nature and struggling against it" (§622, 378).

What the moral individual really has in mind is not morality but rather "a *progressing* [Fortschreiten] toward perfection" (§623, 378*). Yet the idea of moral progress is unintelligible from the Kantian perspective. For it presupposes quantitative differences, whereas for Kant morality is all or nothing. In the same way, we cannot understand on the moral worldview how happiness is possible, say, "on the grounds of its *worthiness*" (§624, 379). A real human being is only imperfectly moral, although we know that someone who is only imperfectly moral is not worthy. The supposed "disharmony of morality and happiness . . . is also nullified" (§625, 379). For someone who is less than fully moral is not moral at all; and is hence totally unworthy. The Kantian idea of the moral individual as imperfect supposes that there is someone else, say, "a *holy moral lawgiver*," who is the source of moral laws; yet since the only principles a moral individual can follow are those it gives itself, such a person "is not really in earnest about letting something be made sacred *by another consciousness* than itself" (§626, 380). Similarly, to postulate a holy being to justify "a multiplicity of particular duties" encounters the difficulty that we can appeal to another only with respect to "pure duty," because specific duties depend on "*free will*" and "*knowledge*" (§627, 381). And it is problematic to take "the other essence" as "purely perfect morality" without "a relation to

Nature and sense," since "the *reality* of pure duty is its *realization* in Nature and sense" (§628, 381).

The moral individual alternates different perspectives "without bringing its *thoughts* together" (§629, 381). As Sartre would say, such an individual is in bad faith.⁵² "It knows its morality to be imperfect because it is affected by the sense-nature and Nature opposed to it" (§630, 381). It is conscious of the tension between the fact that morality is realized, not in the real world, but only within consciousness.

Hegel's lengthy catalog of contradictions in the moral worldview is intended to show that it collapses internally. It is beset with the tension from which it starts, but which it cannot master, between pure duty and independent reality. This results in a distinction between "what *must* be thought and postulated, and yet is at the same time *not* essential" (§631, 382). For when we reflect on this tension, we become aware

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that the "placing-apart of these moments is a displacement" (§631, 383*). The moral individual seeks to avoid this difficulty through the stratagem of returning into itself. Yet the difficulty remains. And the moral individual can only pretend to resolve it in this way through hypocrisy, or what is worse, its concealment.

c. Conscience: the Beautiful Soul, Evil and its Forgiveness

After brief treatments of the moral worldview and its practical consequences, Hegel provides a longer examination of the attitude of conscience to end the exposition of Spirit. Conscience is a consistent theme in Luther's writings. When asked at the Diet of Worms in 1521 to retract his writings, he famously replied that it is never right to go against conscience.⁵³ Hegel applies the Lutheran view of conscience as the final arbiter in his study of the person who refuses moral principles based on external authority. Such a person actively follows duty in the real world according to his own perceptions of right and wrong. In passing, Hegel further criticizes the romantic conception of the beautiful soul.

The Cartesian emphasis on the subject's certainty of itself again returns in the form of the person who acts according to the demands of conscience. Hegel maintains his emphasis on deeds as revelatory of who we are through the term *Gewissen*, "conscience," based on the word *gewiss*, "certain." Self-consciousness that improves on consciousness falls short of full self-awareness that is gained only in and through practical action. We come finally to know ourselves in our practical actions, more precisely when, through conscience, we are called upon to distinguish right from wrong and to act accordingly.

The term "beautiful soul," which was common in the eighteenth century and during Hegel's period, appears in such writers as Schiller, Goethe, and Rousseau. In his brief comment on the beautiful soul, Hegel confronts the typical romantic attitude as well as, indirectly, Fichte's extension of Kantianism. It is one of the ironies of culture that Fichte's hyperrational development of Kant's critical philosophy quickly became a strong influence on the romantic exaltation of feeling against reason.

The distinction between morality and conscience marks the transition from the dichotomy between the desire to act from pure duty (while confronted with an indifferent reality) and the ethical perspec-

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tive in which we feel compelled to act within the world to which we belong. Hegel works here with three conceptions of the practical subject. To begin with, there is the abstract person, whose status and rights are guaranteed by human law in the ethical world. Then, there is the freely acting ethical individual that is the high point of culture. Finally, there is the self of conscience, who differs from the ethical individual in combining individuality and universality.

The moral view of the world, which is marked by the unresolved dualism between purpose and reality, exemplifies the limitation of the merely moral individual. This dualism is overcome in acting from conscience. Such a person is "itself in its contingency completely valid in its own sight, and knows its immediate individuality to be pure knowing and doing, to be the true reality and harmony" (§632, 384). This third self, in which "Spirit is directly aware of itself as absolute truth and being" (§633, 384), differs from the legal person (who receives recognition from others and who is the culmination of the ethical world), and differs as well

from the self of culture that led to absolute freedom. Unlike a merely moral person, the subject of conscience "is, in immediate unity, a *self-realizing* essence, and its action has immediately *concretely* moral form" (§634, 385*).

Someone who acts from conscience is typified, not by respect for this or that duty, or by respect for duty in general, but by the fact that he "knows and does what is concretely right [Rechte]" (§635, 386*). He has no need to appeal to such devices as, say, "a holy essence" (§636, 386) to justify morality. Once more, Hegel refutes by anticipation any conflation of his view and a religious approach to philosophy. A person acting from conscience surpasses the displacement linked to the moral worldview in renouncing the tension between "duty and reality" in favor of a view of the conscious individual who "knows that it has its truth in the *immediate certainty* of itself" (§637, 386-387). The contradiction between the moral self as implicit and as explicit is resolved in "a simple self which is both a *pure* knowing and a knowledge of itself as this *individual* consciousness" (§638, 387).

There is a difference between the moral view of the world, which is motivated by pure duty that is incommensurable with any particular situation, in effect a displacement of the reality of the situation, and the self of conscience. Like real human beings, the latter is motivated by a specific purpose in a particular situation. In the moral worldview, the subject exists for the moral laws it obeys. For the self of conscience, this situation is now reversed. The separation between the individual

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person and duty is overcome. For "the law . . . is for the sake of the self, not the self for the sake of the law" (§639, 387*). Since the moral person does not act, its relation to others remains implicit, or without content. For "*being-for-another* is . . . the *in itself* being [*ansichseiende*]" but the self of conscience acts upon its conviction, and is recognized for what it does, since "the action is thus only the translation of its individual content into the objective element, in which it is universal and recognized" (§640, 388*).

Spiritual reality first appeared on the level of the "honest consciousness" that is concerned with the "abstract heart of the matter [abstrakten Sache selbst]" (§640, 389*) and that reflected a separation between subject and object. This separation is overcome in conscience, where what was abstract is now realized concretely as the deed of consciousness. For the person is "the *subject* that knows these moments within it" (§641, 389).

Action in the real world can only be approximative. Action requires knowledge. A conscientious person, who knows that his knowledge is incomplete, but that this is the best he can do, acts nonetheless. For "this incomplete knowledge is held by the conscientious mind to be sufficient and complete" (§642, 390). What it comes down to is that an individual must act upon what he knows, while aware that he does not know everything, since "conscience knows that it has to choose . . . and to make a decision" (§643, 390).

Hegel now turns to real concrete duties in a social context, or to "the content that at the same time counts as moral *essentiality* or as *duty*" (§644, 391), as distinguished from pure duty. His social concern is visible in his insistence, in the same paragraph, on "everyone's duty to take care of the support of himself and his family, and no less for the possibility of being useful to his fellow men, and of doing good to those in need" and again "on the preservation of life and the possibility of being useful to others" (§644, 391*). Duties toward others are correlated with the individual's duty toward himself. This is not to neglect universal considerations. For "what the individual does for himself also contributes to the general good"; and, since he holds that we have duties to others, "in the fulfillment of duty to individuals and so to oneself, the duty to the universal is also fulfilled" (§645, 393).

Knowledge turns out to be crucial for the self of conscience. It is a precondition for the "unity of the *in itself* and the *being for itself*" that is manifest in action; and action creates "the unity of pure thinking and individuality" that depends on the fact that an individual "knows

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the circumstances" (§646, 393*). Pure duty, or "pure knowing," is the in itself of conscience that leads to action with respect to others in the social world"; and it is "immediately *Being for another* [*Sein für anderes*]" (§647, 393*). Since correct action of the self of conscience is being for another, there is an "inequality [Ungleichheit] in it" between what it is and what it does that Hegel resolves in saying that "his *actuality* is for it not carried out duty and determinate character, but what it has in the absolute certainty of itself" (§648,

394*). If a person is not identical to what he does, it follows that "others," since they cannot "know whether this conscience is morally good or evil" (§649, 394) (but are limited to what appears), are ill placed to judge. What counts as the "action of conscience" is not only the specific action but also the recognition of what one does as one's own, or "the knowledge and conviction that it *is* duty through the knowledge of oneself in the deed" (§650, 395).

Hegel has consistently maintained that we are for others in what we do. He is close to Kant, who distinguishes the decision to act in a given way from so acting, when he insists about the self that "its *immediate* action" is "solely the *self knowing self as such*" (§651, 395). He again stresses the crucial role of "language [Sprache] as the existence of Spirit" (§652, 395), or the way in which a person is for other people. "The content of language" is now variously depicted as manifesting a self-conscious individual who is "certain in itself of the truth" or that he has realized itself in its deeds, "which is acknowledged as knowing it" (§653, 397) or again recognized by others. On this level, it is pointless to ask if the intention is realized through the action. For the distinction "between the universal consciousness and the individual's self" (on which this question rests) has been superseded through conscience, since "its sublation is conscience" (§654, 396-397*).

Hegel, who has so far said nothing about religion, does so briefly now. His discussion emphasizes the Lutheran emphasis on the liberty of the individual conscience and the Socratic *daimon*, an earlier form of consciousness, which he compares to divinity. Conscience possesses the capacity of knowing and of doing what it is necessary to do. In a reference to conscience, in clearly Socratic language, Hegel insists that it "knows the inner voice of what it immediately knows to be a divine voice [göttliche Stimme]," and further carries out such action since "it possesses the spontaneity of life" (§655, 397).

From a Kantian perspective, Hegel's single concept of conscience does the work of the determination of duty on the level of pure prac-

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tical reason, the carrying out of duty in the real world on the level of practical reason, and the transition between them. The action of the individual is "its own divine worship" (§655, 397), or "solitary divine worship" that is simply equated with "the divine worship of a community [Gemeinde]" (§656, 397). This is the way the group expresses itself through the individual. Hegel insists that "God is immediately present" for the self of conscience; but he interprets this claim in a nonstandard manner in writing about the subject that "his knowing as religion" comes down to the fact that "as existing knowing is the utterance of the community over its own Spirit" (§656, 398*).

Hegel, who has so far emphasized the ethical person, who acts from conscience in opposition to the moral individual as two rational approaches to practical action, now considers the beautiful soul of German romanticism. Referring to Fichte, who is not named, he takes up the subject that has "withdrawn into its innermost, for which all externality as such has vanished¾ in the intuition of the 'I' = 'I', in which this 'I' is the whole of essentiality and existence" (§657, 398*). This is the counterpart of the attitude earlier exhibited in the law of the heart, in someone who acts impulsively, indeed irrationally, while taking his own desires as valid for all people. In both cases, the individual is centered only on himself.

Writing soon after the rise of German romanticism that emphasized emotion and feeling against reason, in Goethe's famous novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), in Novalis's poetry, and so on, he now quite naturally distinguishes the subject of conscience from the romantic conception of the beautiful soul. The latter believes that the meaning of the world is to be found by retreating into oneself. Yet this only results in a failure to integrate one's own personal motives and duty in general. We have to do here with an absolute form of self-consciousness, which is concerned not with consciousness but with itself, and which, as consciousness, is divided against itself. As in the unhappy consciousness, a person who has withdrawn from life into himself oscillates widely between extreme abstractions, while failing to act. With biting irony, Hegel renders his judgment of the beautiful soul that, like Kierkegaard's aesthetic individual,⁵⁴

lives in dread [Angst] of besmirching the splendor of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the real world, and persists in its stubborn impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself substantiality, or to transform its thought into being and

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put its trust in the absolute difference. [. . .] Its activity is a yearning." (§658, 400*)

In the beautiful soul, we find the self as a confirmed individualist, who is isolated from the group. Considered from the dynamic perspective of "conscience . . . as acting," the beautiful soul is isolated from and opposed to others as "the antithesis of individuality to other individuals, and to the universal," as someone whose action is "the antithesis of universality or duty" (§659, 400-401). From the perspective of morality, someone who orients his actions to his own values is seen as "evil" and from the ethical perspective as illustrating "hypocrisy" (§660, 401). Evil and hypocrisy can be corrected through restoring the identity of the individual and the universal. For "it must be made apparent that it is evil . . . and the *hypocrisy* must be *unmasked*" (§661, 401).

Yet this is not easy to do. The identity cannot be restored "either by the one-sided persistence" of the beautiful soul in taking itself as the principle of action or in condemning it from "the universal perspective" (§662, 402). The judgment, or appeal to different standards, merely tends to legitimize the individualistic standards of the beautiful soul. "For the former comes forward in opposition to the latter and thereby as a particular law" (§663, 402*). Such judgment is, however, useful in offering a model for "a resolution of the antithesis confronting it"; for "it comes to see its own self in this other consciousness" (§664, 403) through which the beautiful soul can measure itself.

Each action can be examined from the dual perspectives of its relation to duty and its relation to the particular individual. "Just as every action is able to be considered in respect to its conformity to duty, so is it able to be considered in other respect to its *particularity* [*Besonder-heit*]" (§665, 404*). Kant famously defined the good will as wholly disinterested. Hegel, who has in mind a real person, realistically maintains that the good will is a mere fiction since "duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality" (§665, 404). In this context, he cites the purported French proverb that a *valet de chambre* has no heroes, which he amends to read that no one is a hero to his *valet de chambre* just because he is a valet. This amended proverb recurs in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* [55](#) and is taken up in amended form, as he proudly notes there, by Goethe.[56](#)

In practice, judgment of practical action is bad and hypocritical, or "*base* [*niederträchtig*]" in setting itself up as the standard; for it puts

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itself on the same level" (§666, 405) with those it judges. When such judgment elicits an admission from the one being judged, the tendency for the one who judges to take an unyielding attitude in placing himself above others "reverses the situation [*Szene*]" (§667, 405*). This only confirms the beautiful soul in its stubborn attitude. The dilemma of the beautiful soul is that, even when it is made aware of itself, it continues to privilege its inner self that is essential to this attitude. For "it does not possess the power to externalize knowledge of itself that it possesses" (§668, 406*). Since in effect it is not able to change, Hegel, in romantic language, says that the beautiful soul is "disordered to the point of madness, wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption" (§668, 407).

Yet "the true, i.e., the *self-conscious* and existing equalization" (§669, 407*), or a way out of this impasse, is already present through mutual recognition, or absolute spirit, in which each party recognizes the other. This occurs when the side that judges the beautiful soul as wanting softens its unyielding attitude. For "it intuitively [*anschaut*] itself" in the beautiful soul that "throws away [*wegwirft*] its actuality and makes itself into a *sublated this* [*aufgehobenen Diesen*], in fact puts itself forward as universal" (§670, 407*). When both parties give up the subjective, merely self-centered form of judgment and action, the result is "reconciliation [*Versöhnung*]," or "a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute Spirit*" (§670, 408). Foreshadowing his exposition of religion, Hegel maintains that absolute spirit arises only when the beautiful soul, which becomes aware that its pure self-knowledge is abstract, accepts conscious duty that, as universal, is the antithesis of its individualistic self. Hegel now describes in dithyrambic phrases the fully integrated subject as an active being that remains self-identical and yet expands into a duality of subject and its deed. He ends with the statement, which also ends the account of Spirit, that "it is the appearing [*erscheinende*] God in the midst of those who know themselves as pure knowledge" (§671, 409*).

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Chapter 7 "Religion"

One of the great, enduring mysteries of Hegel scholarship is the role of religion in his mature theory, including the *Phenomenology*. More than a century and a half ago, the breakup of the Hegelian school after his death into different factions already turned on different approaches to this mystery. In simplest terms, the orthodox, or Hegelian middle, desired to maintain what was perceived as his synthesis of religion and philosophy, the Hegelian right wished to subordinate philosophy to religion, and the Hegelian left wanted to eliminate the religious component entirely.¹

The idea that Hegel is a basically religious thinker is very strong, for instance, in British Hegelianism, which routinely relates all phenomena to the self-development of religious spirit that is equated to the Christian God,² thereby further expanding the traditional right-wing reading of Hegel.³ Yet it is clear in the *Phenomenology* that, consistent with the epistemological thrust of the book, Hegel studies religion as a form of knowledge just "below" absolute knowing, in effect as a defective form of philosophy. Although Hegel was a believing Christian, and although religion belongs to his theory of knowledge, it does not follow that his theory is a basically religious one. While acknowledging the importance of religion, as a philosopher Hegel defends philosophy against religion, Descartes against Luther.⁴

Hegel focuses on religion in the third of four chapters devoted to the overall theme of reason. This chapter is also the third shortest of the four concerning reason. It is surprising, in view of his extensive

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background and interest in religion, that the discussion in "Religion" is less than half as long as that of either "Reason" or "Spirit." Yet it is not surprising that Hegel would comment on religion^{3/4} not because he wishes to stress that philosophy is religious or religious in inspiration^{3/4} since it figures crucially in his theory of knowledge. In this chapter, Hegel criticizes religion for its reliance on representation that falls short of conceptual thought.

A difficulty in appreciating Hegel's view of religion lies in the fact that the relation between religion and philosophy has significantly altered since his day. One of the major ironies of modern culture is that despite their respective contributions to religion and philosophy, neither Luther nor Descartes draws a clear distinction between reason and faith. Perhaps it is not possible fully to emancipate philosophy from religion. Yet, at least since the Renaissance, philosophy and culture in general have been becoming steadily more secular, to the point of being secular, as successive generations of thinkers since the ☞

Enlightenment ☞ continue to struggle to draw this distinction.

In modern times, the ties binding philosophy to religion have never been looser than they are today. Although perhaps not as tight as they had earlier been, they were certainly tighter when Hegel wrote than they have been since that time. After the rise of Christianity, for centuries it seemed natural to subordinate reason to faith, or at least to philosophize within a more or less consciously delineated religious framework. This latter attitude still attracted the great post-Kantian German idealists, all of whom studied in the Protestant seminary, all of whom initially intended to become pastors, and all of whom worked out their theories against a common Protestant background.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the close relation of philosophy and religion was perceived as normal, when it was examined at all. Religion was regarded as an integral part of philosophy, which was expected to come to grips with, not simply to ignore, religious themes. Within the framework of his critical philosophy, Kant limited himself to a wholly rational theory of religion.⁵ Like Kant before and Hegel after him, Fichte engaged religion on the level of reason, as a *Vernunftreligion*. The accidentally anonymous publication of his book on religion,⁶ which was immediately mistaken for Kant's long-awaited work on the topic, quickly brought him early fame and a professorship in Jena. Several years later, as a result of the famous *Atheismusstreit*, Fichte's perceived opposition to religion cost him his professorship. Schelling's position, which early was close to Fichte's, later became a kind of religious mysticism.

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Yet a scant two centuries later, it is more difficult for us to grasp the connection between religion and philosophy for it no longer seems very natural at all. For the close link between them, which never existed in the United States and was weaker in England than in continental Europe, has been appreciably weakened everywhere else in the philosophical world. The possible exception is France, where, ever since Descartes, and despite the antireligious revolt fostered by Sartre, philosophy and religion, particularly philosophy and Roman Catholicism, remain closely intertwined.⁷

Hegel's interest in religion, developed in the seminary, predated his concern with philosophy and continued throughout his life. Yet he only began to lecture on religion after he arrived in Berlin. He did so four times: in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831, the year of his death.⁸ Many of his early manuscripts, unpublished during his lifetime, treat religious themes, often in ways that foreshadow the later theory. These include "The Life of Jesus" (1795), "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" (1795-1796), and "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (1798-1800).

In Hegel's time, the struggle over the philosophical role of religion was already looming. It broke out openly in his wake. Kierkegaard subordinates everything to religion, which Nietzsche,⁹ Marx to a lesser extent, and the Marxists¹⁰ above all regard as a mere hindrance. An advantage of Hegel's approach is to enable him to see religion as crucial for philosophy. We have already noted the connection he draws between the Lutheran rejection of authority and the Cartesian idea of free thought that brought about the great leap forward to modern philosophy. His rational perspective on religion, which persists throughout his writings, is evident very early on. In "The Life of Jesus," he claims as early as the initial sentence that God is reason and that the world is intrinsically rational: "The Godhead [Gottheit] itself is pure reason, unready for limitations. The plan of the world is above all ordered according to reason."¹¹ A similar view persists in his mature position, for instance, in his remark in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that "God is rational, absolute reason, absolute rational activity."¹²

In his writings on religion, Hegel consistently presents a rational interpretation of Christianity. As Hegel was educated in the seminary, it is not surprising that he initially appropriates Kant's moral theory through a Christian perspective and only later through his own view of ethics. In "The Life of Jesus," when Hegel has not yet distanced himself from the letter of Kant's theory, he talks about the need to honor the eternal law of ethics.¹³ And he further says that although it is permitted to hate one's enemies, one must respect their humanity.¹⁴

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In "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," he emphasizes that true religion, including his own, is human morality.¹⁵ He regards Jesus as a teacher of a purely moral religion.¹⁶ But he rejects the transformation of Jesus' religion into a positive religion, based on authority, the same point on which he criticizes Judaism.¹⁷ In the same text, he defines the meaning of Protestantism, to which he adheres, as in principle rejecting authority in matters of religious belief.¹⁸ This is entirely consistent with his later insistence on conscience in the discussion of spirit in the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel's rationalist approach to religion is further evident in his discussion of this theme in one of the four chapters devoted to reason in general in the *Phenomenology*. Scholasticism traditionally insists on the subordination of reason to faith, hence of thinking within the bounds set by Christian revelation. The ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ reaction against this approach led to a well-known enmity to religion, which was viewed as the enemy of knowledge. Hegel rejects the very idea of emancipating reason from faith, since we require faith in reason. His account of the French Revolution as in effect the result of reason run amok criticizes the effect of pure reason in the practical sphere. He does not, like so many ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ figures, merely dismiss religion as a source of knowledge. Yet he refuses to subordinate philosophy to religion, preferring rather to subordinate religion to philosophy. Although he holds that religion is not the epistemological terminus ad quem, it at least remains an obligatory way station on the road to knowledge. Failure to grasp that for Hegel, as important as it is, religion is not the final goal results in a frequent misinterpretation of a theory that retains a strong religious component, albeit in a rationalistic form, as a theory of religion. Yet this is to take the part for the whole.

Hegel is frequently an obscure writer. Perhaps because his interest in religion, which goes back to his days in the seminary, has meanwhile had the time to crystallize in his mind,

the chapter on religion has a relative degree of clarity mainly lacking elsewhere in the book. Although he never became a clear writer, he was most clear about the themes with which he had wrestled for years on his conceptual journey down the long road that led from the seminary to his mature philosophical theory. To forestall misunderstandings arising from the translation, it is important to note that Miller's idiosyncratic rendering of *Wesen* not as "essence" but as "being" throughout this chapter incorrectly suggests that in his exposition of religion Hegel is making an ontological claim, which is not the case.

The chapter begins with an epistemological point that links the ac-

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count of religion to the immediately preceding account of spirit. The preceding discussion of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit has also been concerned with religion understood "as consciousness of *absolute essence* [*Wesen*] whatsoever," but "*only from the standpoint of consciousness*, which is conscious of absolute essence" (§§672, 410*).

Consciousness of absolute essence does not include absolute essence as such, Hegel's term for spirit as fully self-conscious. The difference, then, is one between people cognitively aware of their object on different levels, culminating in the analysis of the individual in relation to the community in the chapter on spirit, and the object as being in some sense self-aware, or self-conscious. Like the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, for Hegel spirit is present on all levels of the community. In calling for a study of absolute essence in and for itself, he indicates that the next step, after depicting the community in terms of spirit, is to analyze ways in which the community, as well as the individuals of which it is composed, becomes self-aware.

The importance of this new step in the analysis can be seen against the background of the ongoing argument. A key to knowledge is to reconceive the traditional, abstract view of the subject in Descartes and Kant as real human being. This phase of the argument comes to a conclusion in "Spirit." The next phase begins in the exposition of religion and terminates in "Absolute Knowing," the last chapter of the book. It concerns the self-knowledge of the social subject, more precisely our realization that this social subject is us, in the first instance through religion.

Hegel begins by recalling ways in which religion figures on different levels in the prior discussion. From the Kantian perspective of the understanding, all consciousness is "consciousness of the *supersensible* or the *inner* of objective existence" understood as a "universal" that is "still a long way from being Spirit knowing itself as Spirit" (§673, 410*). At this point, the subject has not yet recognized itself in its object, or the object as itself. Although the immediate forms of reason are without religion, it is present "in the ethical world" as "the *religion* of the *underworld*" through "fate and in the Eumenides of the *departed spirit*" (§673, 410). This essentially Greek view later gave way to "*faith in Heaven*" or a "*kingdom of faith*" that existed only abstractly, on the level of thought, but not conceptually, before declining in "the *Religion of the* ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞" (§675, 411*). Religion is restored in merely negative form as "the religion of morality" (§676, 411) that is the counterpart of the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞.

Social subjects know themselves only within the world. As concerns

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religion, "the self-knowing Spirit," or the individual conscious of itself, is "immediately its own pure self-consciousness" (§677, 411). On the religious plane, such knowledge is formulated in the form of representations (*Vorstellungen*) (what Miller, substituting interpretation for translation, calls picture-thinking) as distinguished from concepts (*Begriffe*). "Actuality" as it appears within religion is described as "the *thought*, universal actuality" (§677, 411), which is not yet a concept. Religion falls short in the precise sense that representation falls short of the concept featured in philosophy. As a result, the religious subject is divided, and in fact beyond religion. For the self's "existence differs from its self-consciousness, and its own actuality falls outside of religion" (§678, 412*). Religion lacks the unity in diversity, analyzed in "Spirit," in which "Spirit must appear to itself, or be in actuality, what it is in its essence" (§678, 412).

Hegel now considers human being as it falls outside religion, in the form of "Spirit in its world, or Spirit's *existence*" (aspects that have already been analyzed in "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness," "Reason," and "Spirit"). Human being as spirit is "immediate Spirit, which is not yet consciousness of Spirit" (§679, 413), which only occurs in religion. Religion,

which presupposes that the prior moments have already occurred, is "the *simple* totality or its absolute self" (§679, 413), which is not temporal. "Only the totality of Spirit is in Time" since this is the way that "the whole has true actuality, and hence the form of pure freedom in exchange for [gegen] the other, which expresses itself in time" (§679, 413*). Religion is the "perfection of Spirit," or "its ground," whose moments constitute "the existing actuality of the totality of Spirit," and which becomes through "the movement of its universal moments" (§680, 413*). Although religion is already contained in the development of the prior moments, we only become aware of the nature of religion when we become aware of the overall process, to which it belongs.

The whole Spirit, the Spirit of religion, is again the movement away from its immediacy toward the attainment of the knowing of what is in itself or immediately, and it is to reach the shape in which it appears for its consciousness, in which its essence is perfectly identical, and it intuitively itself as it is. (§680, 412*)

In religion, the entire process begins to become aware of itself in an insufficient fashion, requiring completion in philosophy. From the perspective of the entire process, "the shapes, which until now have come

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forth, order themselves differently" (§681, 414*). Each of the moments so far analyzed forms a self-enclosed unity that belongs to a totality within which "all its particular moments take and receive in common into themselves the like determinateness of the whole" (§681, 414). Since spirit is concrete, whereas religion is abstract, differences can be understood for "actual Spirit" as "attributes of its substance" and in "religion" as "only predicates of the Subject" (§681, 415).

The distinction between spirit as it exists, or is "actual," and as "it knows itself" (or between "consciousness" and "self-consciousness") recurs within religion. Hegel distinguishes three such stages, beginning with natural religion, the perspective of consciousness. Natural religion is merely "immediate," no more than a mere "concept of religion," or again "Spirit in the form of immediacy, and the determinateness of the form in which it appears to itself is that of *being*" (§682, 415). It is followed by the religion of art, the perspective of self-consciousness, in which religion has externalized itself in concrete form, "in the shape of a sublated natural existence of the self" (§683, 416*). Revealed religion unites the other two forms. In this form of religion, spirit "has indeed attained its true *shape*" (§683, 416), since this is true religion. Yet religion as such that relies on representation in all its forms falls short of the concept (*Begriff*) that is specific to philosophy.

A. Natural Religion

The space devoted to the three forms of religion distinguished here is severely unequal, with no more than a few pages on natural religion, which now appears as a main form of pre-Christian faith. In an early essay on natural and positive forms of religion, Hegel defines the former as that one religion corresponding to universal human nature¹⁹ In his later *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he discusses natural religion in detail. In arguing against the idea of primal human innocence (for instance, in Rousseau's idea of the state of nature as intrinsically good), he defines natural religion as the initial stage in which the spiritual element, recognized as primary for human being, is present only in its simplest, undeveloped form. There he provides elaborately detailed, informed, separate accounts of Chinese, Buddhist, Lamaist, Persian, and Egyptian religions²⁰ Here his treatment of this theme is less informed, generally unsympathetic, and rather cursory.

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Natural religion features a division in the subject, since "the Spirit . . . is conscious of itself" and "for itself" (§684, 416), or self-conscious. Hegel's treatment of religion is concerned solely with this "opposition [Entgegensetzung]," since the shape it takes allows us to distinguish between religions; this is so even if "the series of different religions . . . sets forth again only the different aspects of a *single* religion" (§684, 417). The distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness is not overcome merely through thought, since "the *represented [vorge-stellte]* self is not the *actual* self" (§684, 417). The truth of a particular faith lies in the way that "actual spirit resembles the form in which it appears in religion," or in its "reconciliation [Versöhnung]" (§684, 418*). From this normative perspective, Hegel simply declares, intolerantly enough³⁴ perhaps influenced by Herder's view

that Oriental religion is childlike²¹ ³⁴ that Oriental religion, which lacks this reconciliation, is untrue.

a. God as Light (*Lichtwesen*)

Hegel's survey of forms of natural religion starts with the Zoroastrian view of God as light, where it is only a "concept in contrast to reality [Realität]" (§685, 418*). Religion, which exists in different forms, does so initially as nonreflective, as something that simply is. This is a form belonging to "*immediate Consciousness* or to *sense -certainty*" (§686, 419) that only differs from sense-certainty through its spiritual character. In a series of metaphors, he describes this religion as "the light of sunrise," as "torrents of light," but also as "insubstantial," as "lacking understanding [unverständig]" (§686, 419), and as offering "merely names of the many-named One" (§687, 419). It is difficult to regard this description as more than minimally positive.

b. Plant and Animal

Hegel now turns to Eastern religion that at this point he seems to know no better, or to be more sympathetic to, than he was to Zoroastrianism. The difference between this and the preceding stage is that the religious individual has left immediate consciousness, or awareness of being, behind in favor of so-called spiritual perception. This is the level of "pantheism," which is marked by a multiplicity of different types of spirits. These include the guilelessness of so-called flower religion and animal religions that feature warring entities, or "a

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host of separate, antagonistic national Spirits [Völkergeister] who hate and fight each other to the death" (§689, 420). Continuing his preference for spirit over reason, Hegel remarks that the form of religion in which we make religious objects, where "the self becomes a Thing" (§69, 421), is superior to the warring spirits. For here religion is actualized.

c. The Master Artificer (*Werkmeister*)

Hegel may have borrowed the term "Werkmeister" from Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who used it in his famous *History of Ancient Art Among the Greeks* ²² to characterize Greek art, as Hegel does here. Winckelmann was a German archaeologist and historian of art who strongly influenced the German interest in ancient Greece, particularly Greek art, after the middle of the eighteenth century. Hegel cites him often in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

Werkmeister, which now literally means "foreman," derives from *Werk*, meaning "work, deed, production, performance, undertaking," and so on. It refers, in short, to doing or producing in general. It can be loosely construed as referring to the master worker, or master artificer, in this case the one who produces religious objects on a rather low level, as distinguished, say, from Greek art.

Such work is the result of abstract understanding, not of spirit. It is characterized as an unreflective, "instinctive working [Arbeiten]," comparable to the way that "bees construct their cells" (§691, 421"). Within natural religion, the religious individual who fashions material (like the slave in the master-slave relation) is no more than partially self-aware. "Work [Werk]" that results from "the abstract form of the understanding" is not "filled with Spirit" (§692, 421), since on this level religious individuals do not fully recognize themselves in what they make. Natural religion is marked by a "separation [Trennung]" between the work done and the worker, or the "*in-itself* which becomes the material it fashions, and the being-for-self which is the aspect of self-consciousness at work" that "becomes objective to it in its work" (§693, 422). The artificer appropriates "plant-life" that he fashions into "mere ornament" (§694, 422). This object partially overcomes the separation between the individual and existence. Although it "includes within it a shape of individuality," so that "the individual knows himself in his work," on this level religion still lacks language, or "the shape

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and outer reality in which the self exists as self" (§695, 423), presumably since it is nonreflective.

Abandoning for a moment the external form of the self as what we ourselves produce, Hegel rapidly considers the contrary idea, in which spirit is present internally. He illustrates this in a tactless reference to the Black Stone of Islam, where "the *covering for inner being* . . . is still simple darkness, the unmoved, the black, formless stone" (§696, 423). Both types of religious spirit, as respectively an item in nature or a thing that is produced, are deficient. Hegel suggests that the "two have to be united" by the artificer (§697, 423). In this way, "in this work" the instinctive type of production is replaced by the self-conscious activity of the master artificer, in whose activity "Spirit meets Spirit," so that "Spirit is *Artist*" (§698, 424).

B. Religion in the Form of Art (Die Kunst-Religion)

Art is the other main form of pre-Christian religion considered by Hegel. The main difference between natural religion and religion in the form of art is that the latter features the elevation of the spiritual, which distinguishes human being, above the natural. In his later *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, from a slightly different perspective not tied to art, he included in this category both Greek and Jewish religion. He further discussed Roman religion before turning to Christianity. Here he considers only Greek religion.

Like many other German intellectuals of his time, Hegel participated in the virtual worship of all things Greek.²³ As a teenager, he made a number of translations from the Greek. He was very interested in Greek tragedy, especially Sophocles. He became closely familiar with Greek art in the context of his detailed study of aesthetics.²⁴ For all these reasons, he understandably goes into more detail in his discussion of religion in the form of art exemplified in ancient Greece.

According to Hegel, the difference between natural religion and Greek religious art is that the latter is specifically ethical. It is interesting, since he regards Christianity as the true religion, that he regards the ethical element typical of true religion as already present in pre-Christian Greek religion. He takes a wide view of art that includes not only art objects but also language, such as plays, poetry, and oracular declarations. Rather than the narrowly religious form of Greek art, he

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has in view the religious dimensions of ancient Greek life in general considered as art.

In his account of religion as art, Hegel emphasizes the difference between instinctive and self-conscious forms of productive activity. The latter is the activity of the ethical, or true, spirit of human beings, who are fully aware of what they do, and the artificer is "a spiritual worker" (§699, 424). Like a person who acts ethically, a religious artist, indeed any artist, realizes himself in what he does. For "the universal substance . . . is known by the individuals as their own essence and their own work" (§700, 424*). With an eye toward ancient Greece, he describes real spirit that becomes aware of itself in the religion of art as "the free people [das freie Volk] in which mores [Sitte] constitute the substance of all, whose actuality and existence each and everyone knows as his will and deed" (§700, 425*).

Like all ethics, the ethical religion of ancient Greece requires a thoughtful distinction between the individual and the surrounding social context. This "elevation above its real world," where "pure individuality" is lacking, receives its "fulfillment firstly in the divorce from its existential shape" (§701, 425*). For the principle of individuality as we now know it only arose in Christian thought, hence after ancient Greek philosophy. Greek political theory was scarcely aware of the individual, or of individual rights.²⁵ For Hegel, the ethics of the free individual reaches its high point and fate in "the individuality that has gone into itself" (§701, 425*). Although the realization of individuality lies in the social context, the individual, who breaks with it, is in effect raised above a world that it has lost. "In such an epoch, absolute art [die absolute Kunst] makes its appearance" (§702, 426). Unlike earlier forms of religious art that are marked by an instinctive mode of production, on this level the self-conscious person realizes himself in the form of an object, through "activity [Tätigkeit] with which Spirit brings itself forth as object" (§703, 426). In purple prose, Hegel reformulates this idea: "The *existence* of the pure concept into which Spirit has flown from its body is an individual, which it chooses as the vessel of its pain" (§704, 426-4-27*).

a. The Abstract Work of Art (Kunstwerk)

Hegel now distinguishes three forms of religion in the form of art. He begins with art on the lowest level, which, like contemporary nonrepresentational art, is "immediate, . . . abstract and individ-

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ual" (§705, 427). Here the separation between "artistic spirit and its active consciousness" is greatest, since "the former *is there* whatsoever [überhaupt] as a *thing*" (§706, 427*). The allusive, imprecise nature of the discussion makes it difficult to follow. Such art is characterized by mere shape, or existence as a thing. In another regrettable reference to Islam, the form of abstract art is illustrated through the Black Stone, whose "indwelling god is drawn forth . . . and pervaded with the light of consciousness" (§707, 428) through the artist. The very limited achievement here lies in the fact that "this simple shape has dispelled [zerstreut] the unrest of endless individuation" (§708, 428*). Since abstract art in general is characterized by a dissimilarity between the artist and the artwork, the individual artist does not recognize himself in what he does. As the work is not individualized, "the artist, then, experiences [erfährt] in his work that he did not produce an essence [Wesen] like himself" (§709, 429*).

This objection, which would be fatal to a form of abstract art restricted to concrete things, can be overcome by taking a sufficiently wide view to include other, nonplastic forms of art. Recurring to his view of language, Hegel now maintains that, since individualization is not realized in abstract art, "the work of art demands another element" that turns out to be "language¾ a being-there [Dasein], which is immediately self-conscious existence [Existenz]" (§710, 429-430*). The type of language he has in mind "differs from the other language of the god" (§711, 430*). With Greek tragedy in mind, he remarks that such language that contains "simplicity of truth as essential being . . . knows it *as the sure and unwritten law of the gods, a law that is 'everlasting' and no one knows whence it came*" (§712, 431). Through the Delphic Oracle, the Greek people reminds itself of general truths keyed to particular circumstances, or "knows its particular affairs and what is advantageous to them" (§712, 431). Speech now takes on the role of an immaterial work of art in which individuals find themselves as a "work of art . . . in contrast to the Thing-like character of the statue" (§713, 432).

Hegel is thinking of the competing Greek religious cults, since described memorably by Nietzsche²⁶ and others. In the cult, a people "reaches consciousness of the descending [Herabsteigen] of divine essence" (§714, 432*), or becomes aware of the approach of the divine that earlier was merely depicted in objective form. This occurs in "the stream of sacred song [des hymnischen Gesanges]" (§715, 432) and in devotion, initially in the imagination and then later in reality. For

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Hegel, who routinely insists on actuality as the standard, the "cult" offers only "a *secret*, that is a represented, inactual [unwirkliches] fulfillment" (§716, 433*). For fulfillment on this level occurs only within imagination.

In the cult, nature is considered in two ways, since "the divine essence presents itself as *actual Nature*" that belongs to us either "as possession and property" or as our "*own* immediate actuality and individuality" (§717, 433). The religious ceremony that "begins with the 'pure willingness to sacrifice [Hingabe] of a possession, which the owner . . . pours away or lets rise up in smoke'" (§718, 434*), is doubly significant: as the surrender of the individual; and through the sacrifice of the animal symbolizing, for example, Ceres, the god of bread, or Bacchus, the god of wine. The reader is struck here by the similarity between Hegel's description of Greek rites and his earlier description, in "Unhappy Consciousness," of the Christian Trinity. As for Christianity, so in the cult the meaning "lies mostly in devotion" (§719, 435) that is not produced in objective form at all.

b. The Living Work of Art

After his remarks on the abstract work of art culminating in the religious cult, Hegel turns more briefly to the living work of art exemplified in the cult. As for the oracle, so the cult of the religion of art is a way in which an "ethical people.., knows its state and its actions as its

will and perfection" (§720, 435*). For its members, such a religion "secures their enduring existence and their substance as such, but not their actual self," because their god is not yet "Spirit" (§720, 436*).

Hegel judges and approves the ancient Greek state in terms of Rousseau's modern criterion, according to which the individual is realized in the state. Although the adherents of this religion are taken up in the state, the idea of individuality is not yet present. For in the art object, the artist is not reconciled with his essence. The type of satisfaction reached within the cult is that "the Self knows that it is one with the essence" (§722, 437*). As in the **Enlightenment** , the relation to nature is purely one of use, which Hegel, with an eye again to Ceres and Bacchus, describes as reaching its highest level in food and drink. For if there is no higher mystery, then "enjoyment is its mystery of being" (§722, 437).

The result is that "through the Cult the *simple* essence becomes

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manifest to the self-conscious Spirit" (§723, 437). Yet what is disclosed to it is "only absolute Spirit, this simple essence, and not the Spirit in itself" (§724, 438*). From his Protestant perspective that is in this respect closer to Greek religion than to the Roman Church, he repeats that on this level "self-conscious life is only the mystery of bread and wine, of Ceres and Bacchus" (§724, 438). With pagan Greek festivals in mind, he says that here "the statue that confronts the artist," but is "intrinsically lifeless," is replaced by the human statue, or "a living self," such as "a torch-bearer, . . . an inspired and living work of art" (§725, 438). Unlike Bacchic rites, in festivals the individual surpasses oracular speech and emotional hymns in the form of the living statue with universal import.

For Hegel, perhaps thinking of the Greek canons of aesthetic taste, this content is simply universal. The beautiful warrior is the honor of his people, as well as a corporeal individual in respect to which anything that is specific has disappeared. Yet the statue and the human statue that depict "the unity of self-consciousness of spiritual essence still lack equal weight [Gleichgewicht]" (§726, 438-439*). For Bacchic enthusiasm is completely unlike religious language. Echoing the Christian doctrine of kenosis, or the emptying of Christ on behalf of human beings, Hegel contends that in such ways, say, through "the handsome warrior," a particular people surpasses its own "particularity . . . and is conscious of the universality of its human existence" (§726, 439).

c. The Spiritual Work of Art

In his later *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel discusses divine content and then the cults. His brief treatment here of early Greek cults and rituals is followed by a longer, more detailed account of the spiritual work of art. In this context, he studies the pantheon of Greek gods as well as relevant aspects of Greek literature, including the epic, tragedy, and comedy.

We recall that the ancient Greeks regarded those who did not speak their language as barbarians, as less than fully human. Hegel is concerned to show the function of religion in unifying disparate elements with respect to a common purpose expressed in language. Earlier he discussed spirit as uniting a people or nation. Here he identifies the role of religion in forming a disparate people into a single state. In giving form to itself, for instance, when the different spirits of the people (*Volksgeister*) coalesce as a single "animal," they "form a pantheon" that in turn "constitutes a nation [Nation], which is united [verbindet] for

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a common undertaking, and constitutes for this task [Werk] an entire people and an entire heaven" (§727, 439-440*). For Hegel, "the assembly of national Spirit," or this pantheon, "embraces the whole of Nature as well as the whole ethical world" (§728, 440). This occurs "in representation [*Vorstellung*], in the synthetic linkage of self-conscious and external existence" (§729, 440*) provided through language, especially in the epic, or universal song, such as the Homeric poems that are presented by the singer (*Sänger*).

The heroes, whose exploits are recounted, such as Odysseus and Achilles, are "only represented [*vorgestellte*] and are thereby at the same time universal, like the free extreme of universality, the gods" (§729, 441*). The epic expounds "what takes place in the cult *in itself*, the relation of the divine to the human" (§730, 441*). Presumably thinking of the violence depicted in the *Iliad*, Hegel describes its action, in an obviously sexual metaphor, as

"the violation [Verletzung] of the peaceful earth, the pit ensouled by blood" (§730, 441*). The gods are both eternal, above time, and particular individuals. They relate to human beings through necessity (*Notwendigkeit*) that focuses disparate elements, as in the life of the hero, who, like Achilles, the central figure of the *Iliad*, is fated to die young. The gods are depicted as inherently contradictory. For "their universality comes into conflict with their own specific character and its relationship to others" (§731, 442). Their actions are fraught with "necessity, . . . the *unity* of the *concept*" (§732, 443*) that brings together the dispersed moments.

Tragedy differs basically from the epic through "higher language" that, since it is not merely narrative, but concerns content that is not imagined, "gathers closer together the dispersed moments of the essential and the acting world" (§733, 443). It depicts real people, in roles played by actors speaking in their own voices to the audience. The subjects of tragedy are "self-conscious human beings who *know* and know how to say their rights and purposes, the power and the will of their specific nature," since the action concerns, not contingent circumstances, but the pathos of "universal individuality" (§733, 444*). The "common ground," or basis, of tragedy lies in "consciousness of the first representing language [vorstellenden Sprache]" (§734, 444*) through which the ordinary people (*das gemeine Volk*) express their folk wisdom in the chorus of the elders. At this level, spirit appears as combining absolute extremes. For "these elementary universal essences [Wesen] are at the same time self-conscious individualities" (§735, 445*).

The ethical relation assumes a purer, simpler form in religion, where

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"the content and movement of Spirit . . . reaches consciousness of itself . . . in its purer form and its simpler embodiment" (§736, 445). With an eye to the *Oresteia*, as well as to *Macbeth*, Hegel says that tragedy exhibits a dualism, reflected in the activity of the individual, "in the contradiction of knowing and not-knowing" (§737, 446*). The tragic situation reflects a distinction between appearance and reality.

Tragic heroes, even when they are explicitly informed by what a god reveals, are still misinformed and doomed to destruction. "Mistrust [Mißtrauen]" is justified since the tragic hero is caught in a "contradiction of self-certainty and of objective essence" (§738, 447*), between what he knows and reality. The "world of the gods of the Chorus is restricted by the acting individuality" (§739, 447) to three beings: substance (or the manifestation of human action), the Erinyes (i.e., the three furies who in Greek mythology inexorably but justly pursued sinners on the earth), and Zeus. In tragedy, ethical right is powerless against absolute law, or fate, the lesser right that enjoys equal honor before Zeus. In action, the hero becomes "aware of the contradiction" since "the revealed information" is "deceptive" (§740, 448*) and leads to inconsistencies. What is concealed is also openly revealed in a variety of ways, through the priestess, witches, and so on. The individual is responsible for not knowing. Both sides are equally correct and equally incorrect; and, in the course of events, both are destroyed. "This fate [Schicksal] completes the depopulation of heaven" since, through the interaction of the human and the divine, "the acting of the essence appears as inconsequential, contingent, unworthy" (§741, 449*). The "necessity" of fate emanates from Zeus as a purely "negative power of all the shapes that appear . . . in which they do not recognize themselves but . . . perish" (§742, 449). The "hero" must consciously remove the "mask and present itself as it knows itself as the fate both of the gods of the chorus and of the absolute powers themselves" (§743, 450*).

As for the various perspectives on knowledge, there is an order among the forms of Greek literature. The situation depicted in tragedy is overcome only in comedy, where "the actual self-consciousness presents itself as the fate of the gods" (§744, 450*). The comic actor, who surpasses the dualism between the real individual and the divine pantheon, both plays a universal role and is an individual person representing the truth of religion as art. But in taking off his mask, the comic actor shows that he is merely human.

Comedy consists in exhibiting this contrast§ The transition from

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tragedy to comedy moves from the depiction of the workings of fate, or at least the will of the gods, to the depiction of human being, or a "universal dissolution of shaped essentiality as such in its individuality" (§744, 450*). The significance of comedy is that "actual self-

consciousness shows that it is itself the Fate to which the secret is revealed, viz. the truth about the essential independence of Nature" (§745,451).

Hegel, who has not so far discussed philosophy among the forms of Greek literary production, does so now. In "Unhappy Consciousness," he has earlier shown the link between philosophy and religion, which he now reinforces. Referring to Plato, he remarks that "rational thinking," unlike the ethical maxims of the chorus, grasps the divine essence through "the simple Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good" (§746, 451) that lack all content. With Aristophanes' burlesque treatment of Socrates in mind, he says that such ideas are merely clouds.

Hegel, who earlier has criticized Kant's theory of morality on similar grounds, now applies the same standard to Plato. Such ideas "display a comic spectacle" (§746,452). The contradiction of fate and human self-consciousness is only finally overcome through the individual who banishes the gods and is the only reality. Parenthetically, this is also the lesson of "Spirit." The religion of art is fulfilled in the human being who, as an actor, just is the role he plays. This reconciliation affords "a state of spiritual well-being and of repose therein, such as is not to be found anywhere outside of this Comedy" (§747, 453).

C. The Revealed Religion (Die offenbare Religion)

The third and last section of "Religion" concerns Christianity characterized by revelation. *Offenbar*, which is based on *offen*, literally signifying "open, public, frank," has the meanings of "obvious" and "manifest." It is related to *offenbaren*, "to reveal," and *Offenbarung* revelation."

It is striking that the central emphasis in Hegel's account of the highest form of religion is not on redemption from sin, or on the relation of human being to God in general, but on Christianity as a way station on the road to knowledge. From the perspective of knowledge, religion is a form of spirit, the penultimate step in the theory of knowl-

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edge expounded in the phenomenological science of the experience of consciousness.

In natural religion, the divine is represented as a thing. The opposite occurs in religion as art, where human being finally appears as the divine. In the cult uniting these two extremes, "the self is absolute essence," so that "the essence, the Substance," in which the individual is realized, "has now sunken to a predicate" (§748, 453). This frivolous proposition is "nonreligious," perhaps even heretical. The account of revealed religion shows that in Christianity there is a converse movement in virtue of which human beings come again to depend on the divine. This is a movement "which degrades the Self to the level of a predicate and elevates Substance to Subject" (§749, 453).

Despite a superficial resemblance, this is not merely a return to the stage of natural religion. It is rather a basic reorientation (*Umkehrung*) in our awareness of ourselves and the divine. Hegel considers various historical movements in his account of religion. This statement should be seen as his considered view of the conceptual significance of the transition from pre-Christian to Christian religion. In revealed religion, the opposing ideas of natural religion and the religion of art, or views of the subject as a thing and the thing as subject, are brought together in an idea uniting consciousness and self-consciousness. For "Spirit," or the human person, "is simultaneously *consciousness* of itself as *objective* substance, as simple *self consciousness*, remaining in itself" (§749,454*).

Hegel brings out this point by relating religion as art to ethics. Religion as art belongs to ethics, which simply perishes in the legal conception of the person as a mere abstraction. For the view that "the Self as such, the abstract person is absolute essence" (§ 750, 454*), lacks content. Since in this conception, "this Self has . . . let the content go free" (§751, 454), it is comparable to the abstract movement of thought from stoicism over skepticism to the unhappy consciousness. Like the unhappy consciousness, it features the paradoxical result of losing itself even as it attains abstract self-awareness, whose religious significance is expressed in the difficult statement "God has died [ist gestorben]" (§752, 455*).

The meaning of this claim for Hegel, better known in Nietzsche's restatement,²⁷ is that the conflict between an abstract conception of the human subject, present in the movement of thought leading up to the unhappy consciousness, and religion finally suppresses the

religious dimension. Since Hegel's day, this is increasingly the case in our ever more secular world. According to Hegel, the emergence of the "legal per-

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spective [Rechzustand]," founded on the concept of the legal individual, results in the decline of "the ethical world and its religion . . . and the Unhappy Consciousness of this *whole* loss" (§753, 4-55*). The disappearance of the religious dimension is felt in the way that "trust in the eternal laws of the gods has vanished, and the Oracles, which pronounced on particular questions, are dumb. The statues are now only stones from which the living soul has flown, just as the hymns are words from which belief has gone" (§753, 455). And enjoyment of such things no longer has anything to do with divine worship.

Missing from this perspective, where religion has disappeared, is spirit that surpasses ethical life and reality, although "all the conditions of its coming forth [seines Hervorgangs] are present" (§754-, 4-56*). This result occurs in ancient Greece in the works of art that (as noted through the word *Er-Innerung*, which is here hyphenated to reflect a dual meaning) both recall and internalize externalized spirit. Through art, the diverse gods are unified in a single pantheon. In the deep sense, art in all its many forms must be representational. For it presents the externalization of absolute substance as a thing.

Through a specific reference to the manger in Bethlehem, Hegel now links spirit to Christianity in asserting that the shapes of religious art and the secular world come together in the consciousness of human being. Unhappy consciousness is the middle point between "the *world* of the *person* and of right" and "the *thought* person of stoicism and skeptical consciousness" that "surround the birthplace [Geburtsstätte] of Spirit becoming self-consciousness" (§754-, 456*).

Revealed religion makes us aware of ourselves. Hegel brings out this point by considering opposing propositions, "the two sides" of Spirit, including that "substance alienates [entäußert] itself from itself and becomes self-consciousness" and, conversely, "that *self-consciousness* alienates itself from itself and gives itself the nature of a Thing, or makes itself a universal Self" (§755, 457). The former is exemplified in the necessity of fate; and the latter is illustrated in ethical life. In the subject's externalization, in its becoming objective, or substance, it becomes self-aware. When the subject and the object are brought together, when the subject becomes the object and conversely, then spirit "comes into existence as this their unity" (§755, 457). Yet a person who "one-sidedly grasps only his own alienation" has not yet reached "true spirit" in the precise sense that "being as such or substance has not in itself, from its own side, externalized itself and become self-consciousness" (§756, 457*).

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It is obviously not sufficient to have an idea. The idea must also be realized. In grasping itself as object, the subject knows that existence is spiritual. This is expressed in Christianity in the idea that absolute spirit has become flesh and that the believer is aware of this divinity (*Göttlichkeit*) through the senses. The way of religion is not from a mere thought to God, since, on the contrary, what is given in existence is recognized as God. For the "*faith of the world* [is] that Spirit as self-consciousness *is there* as an actual man, for immediate certainty, that the believing consciousness *sees* and *feels* and *hears* this divinity" (§758, 458*). This is not, say, to be taken as an assertion of the cosmological proof for the existence of God from the existence of the world. It is rather a claim that, in entering into history in the form of a human being, God becomes self-aware. According to Hegel, "this God becomes immediate as Self, as truly individual man, perceived through sensation; only so *is* this God self-conscious" (§758, 459*).

Christianity is not only the chronologically most recent but also the conceptually final stage of religion. So-called absolute religion is concerned with the incarnation of God in the form of a man that "is the simple content of absolute religion" (§759, 459). Hegel links spirit, revelation, and Christianity in writing that "in this religion the divine Being is *revealed*. Its Being revealed obviously consists in this, that it is known what it is. But it is known precisely in its being known as Spirit, as a Being [Wesen] that is essentially *Self-consciousness*" (§759, 459*).

Revelation concerns the identity of the divine and the human, so that "here . . . consciousness itself is . . . identical with its self-consciousness" (§760, 460*). Christianity is precisely profound in that it realizes the idea implicit in all religion. "Immediate consciousness" is more precisely "religious consciousness" of God become man as "an *existing*

self-consciousness that immediately is, but also of the supreme thought [gedachten] or absolute Essence" (§761, 460-461*). It is sense-consciousness, or immediate consciousness of being, whose highest form is direct awareness of divine being. It is also religious consciousness of the revelation of God as spirit.

Both the theological and mystical traditions claim direct experience of God.²⁸ In his account of the **Enlightenment**, Hegel has implicitly refuted this claim in his criticism of faith. As spirit, God can be known "in pure speculative knowledge alone" (§761, 461*), or through philosophy. For what has been seen in immediate experience of the world in sense-certainty is known representationally within religion, but not yet conceptually. "This Concept of Spirit that knows itself as Spirit is

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itself the immediate Concept and is not yet developed" (§762, 461*). For although revelation is immediate, its grasp is necessarily mediated through concepts.

Referring to Jesus, Hegel writes that through "this individual man . . . which absolute Essence has revealed itself to be . . . He is the *immediately* present God" (§763, 462*). On this level, the religious individual is still not fully conscious of himself as spirit. Religion that depends on "*past* and *absence* [*Entfernung*]" is only superficially thought; for it is limited to "representation" (§764, 462-463*). Although this type of "*representation* constitutes the specific mode in which Spirit, in this community, becomes aware of itself" (§765, 463*), it is not and cannot become self-aware through representation that lacks conceptual mediation. From the perspective of consciousness, "Absolute Spirit is the *content*" whose "truth" is "not merely the Substance of the community nor . . . the objectivity of representation but to become an actual Self, to reflect itself into itself and to be Subject" (§766, 4-66*).

Spirit appears initially within consciousness "in the form of pure substance" for which "representation" is "the middle term" (§767, 464*) between consciousness and self-consciousness. This content has already been encountered in the "Unhappy Consciousness" as that for which Spirit "yearns" and in the "believing consciousness" as "an *objective* content of representation . . . that simply flees from reality" (§768, 464*). Spirit "*represented* as substance in the *element of pure thought*" is not "actual" (§769, 464-465*).

The "three distinct moments" of spirit are "essence . . . or knowing itself *in the other*" (§770, 465*). "This movement expresses absolute essence as *Spirit*" (§771, 465*), although the religious representation that has the same content as philosophy lacks conceptual mediation. For "Absolute Spirit, which is represented in pure essence" (§772, 466*), is, like essence, an abstraction. "Pure thought" only occurs when "the moments of the pure Concept obtain a *substantial* existence relatively to one another" (§773, 467*), when "the merely eternal, or abstract, Spirit becomes an *other* to itself, or enters into existence, and directly into *immediate existence*" (§774, 467*), but only in the form of mere representation.

For Hegel, "world is not merely this Spirit" that just is, but above all "the existing Spirit" (§775, 467*). Implicitly contradicting the idea of original sin, he remarks that, prior to acting, a person, who is not yet spirit, "can be called 'innocent' [unschuldig] but hardly 'good' "

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(§775, 467). Evil is being merely centered on oneself "as the primary existence of the inwardly-turned consciousness" (§ 776, 468). "Good and evil" are the "specific differences yielded by thought," and good can be understood as "an existent self-consciousness" (§777, 469-470*).

More generally, "the alienation of the divine Essence," or God, includes both the subject and "its simple thought," roughly God and human comprehension of God "whose absolute unity is Spirit itself" (§778, 4-70*). This bifurcation into two moments gives rise to an opposition between them that Hegel, now thinking of the second person of the Trinity, says is only overcome through death. For "this death is, therefore, its rising up [Erstehen] as Spirit" (§779, 471*).

Hegel studies this event on three levels, including the resurrection as expressed in the religious community, its representation in thought within the community, and finally within self-consciousness itself. For representational thinking, the divine takes on a human form. What, for representational thinking, is merely a particular only becomes universal from the conceptual perspective after the death of Christ, when "the transcended immediate presence of the self-conscious essence has the form of universal self-consciousness" (§780, 471). At

this point, in returning to themselves, human beings go beyond representational thinking to become self-conscious.

Representational thought concerns reconciliation with otherness from God, identified as evil. Yet it is as incorrect simply to take evil as the opposite of goodness as it is to take it as the same as goodness. Probably thinking of Plato's *Sophist*, Hegel remarks that the mistake lies in trading in abstract terms—the same, not the same, and so on. Apparently siding with the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who emphasizes change, against Plato, who stresses immutability in the theory of ideas, he notes that, since such terms denote abstractions, "neither the one nor the other is true, but only their movement" (§780, 472*). This is also the case for divine being, nature and human nature, whose dynamic interrelation cannot be expressed through the copula "is."

Spirit lies in "universal self-consciousness" that is its "community" and whose "movement as self-consciousness" (as distinguished from representation) is "to bring forth what *in itself* has been" (§781, 473*). This amounts to the familiar claim that what is depicted representationally is not, therefore, understood. Hegel now adds that the community can only understand what has occurred by surpassing religion.

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For religion, the significance of the death of Christ must be raised from a general truth to an explicit truth for each individual. This takes place through self-consciousness that is acquired through the movement of Spirit. This movement is that of "*natural* Spirit," and "the self," or the real human being in the social context, "has to withdraw from this natural existence and retreat into itself, which would mean, to become *evil*" (§782, 473). The individual in the first case is a natural being, who must rise to a comprehension of Christ's death through withdrawing from the natural world.

The difference of perspectives on the same event yields opposing analyses. For representational thinking, the world is essentially evil. Yet for conceptual thought, what is said to have occurred is a transitory developmental phase. Drawing the moral of the cognitive difference between representational and conceptual forms of comprehension, he remarks that, on inspection, each element of the analysis is transformed from a different perspective into its opposite.

Representation, which is static, and conceptual thought, which is dynamic, provide different perspectives on the same theme, such as the problem of evil. "If, then, in the representing consciousness the *in-ward-becoming* of natural self-consciousness was the existing evil, so is the *inner-becoming* in the element of self-consciousness the *knowing* from evil as such, which is the *in itself* in existence" (§783, 474*). For representation, evil arises as the withdrawal from the world into oneself. But for conceptual thought, the grasp of evil as implicit in life attained through a withdrawal from it is a necessary prerequisite to overcoming evil. "This knowledge, hence, gives rise to evil, but only a becoming of the thought of evil, and is therefore recognized as the first moment of reconciliation" (§783, 474*).

In the remaining portion of the chapter, Hegel hammers away at the distinction between religious representation and conceptual comprehension, to begin with in insisting that religion, understood as immediate, requires further development. For "besides this immediacy, the *mediation* of representation is necessary" (§784, 475*). Mediation provides a concrete comprehension (*Ergreifen*) of the represented event, in this case the death of Christ. Conceptual mediation enables us to comprehend that, through "the occurring [Geschehen] of the self-externalization of the divine essence, in its historical incarnation and death, the divine Being has been reconciled with existence" (§784, 475*).

What is only represented remains abstract as mere death, or abstract negativity that is understood conceptually as "the *universality* of the

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Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in its every day, and is daily resurrected" (§784, 475). In superseding representation through conceptual thought, the result is the death, not only of Christ, but also of the abstract representation of Christ's death that fails to provide a concrete grasp of the event. "The death of this representation [Vorstellung] contains therefore at the same time the death of the *abstraction of the divine essence* that it is not posited as self" (§785, 476*). Religion fails to comprehend Christ's death that is finally comprehended only by philosophy. "This Knowing is the *spiritualization* [Begeistung], whereby Substance becomes Subject, its abstraction and lifelessness have died, and it therefore has

become real and simple and universal Self-Consciousness" (§785, 476*). For although religion can represent its key events, it cannot comprehend them.

In the conceptual thought of philosophy, spirit becomes aware of itself. "In this way, therefore, Spirit is self-knowing Spirit; it knows *itself*, which is object for it; it, or its representation is, the true absolute *content*; it expresses, we saw, Spirit itself" (§786, 476*). The content is both the subject that knows and its object that it knows as the subject; and the moving of thought is self-movement, or the coming to self-knowledge of the real human subject, understood as spirit.

In philosophy, we know what is only represented in religion. Since the religious community is not philosophical, it fails to grasp either its object or itself. It follows that "the [religious] community also does not possess consciousness of what it is" (§787, 4-77). By implication, it further fails to grasp the religious significance of philosophical insight that completes religion. For "this depth of the pure Self is the power by which the abstract divine Being is drawn down from its abstraction and raised to a Self by the power of this pure devotion" (§787, 4-77-4-78). Since the members of the religious community do not understand that reconciliation is achieved in philosophy, they view it as an as yet unrealized future event. Accordingly, there remains a division between spirit and religion. For the latter, which does not grasp itself, tends toward a unity it cannot itself realize.

The Spirit of the community is thus in its immediate consciousness divided from its religious consciousness, which declares, it is true, that *in themselves* they are not divided, but this merely *implicit* unity is not realized, or has not yet become an equally absolute being-for-self. (§787, 478)

Chapter 8 "Absolute Knowing"

After the relatively transparent discussion in "Religion," the clearest chapter in the *Phenomenology*, we come now to its last and certainly most cryptic chapter, which still retains a large portion of mystery after almost two centuries. In part, this chapter is so difficult to understand since it is also so short, shorter than any of the others, scarcely longer than the introduction to the book. It is possible that in this chapter Hegel says what he wants to say as he wants to say it. It is more likely that this chapter is short, even severely compressed, for an eminently practical reason: he needed to finish his book on time to protect the financial guarantee for its publication offered by I. H. Niethammer, his friend and sometime patron.

It is unfortunate that in other, later writings, he never came back to the theme of absolute knowing in a way that unlocks its secrets. Despite suggestions to the contrary, this difficult discussion is certainly not impenetrable,¹ Yet to follow the repetitious, convoluted argument, we shall need to remain very close to the text.

A conception of absolute knowing obviously presupposes a conception of the absolute. Hegel, who defines a number of fundamental terms in this chapter, such as "science," "experience," and "cognition," simply presupposes an understanding of "absolute." To grasp Hegel's view of this term, it is useful to refer to its prior history.

Epistemologically, the absolute functions as a concept dependent on nothing else, hence as a final, or ultimate, explanatory principle. Appeal to an ultimate explanatory principle is a frequent strategy to avoid

an infinite regress, what Hegel calls a bad infinity. Merely among pre-Socratic cosmologists, Thales invokes water, Anaximander, the *apeiron*; and Anaxagoras, *nous*, or reason. In modern philosophy, Jakob Boehme appeals to an *Ungrund*, Descartes to the *cogito*, and Kant to the transcendental unity of apperception as the highest point of the understanding, the whole of logic and transcendental philosophy, and so on.

"Absolute" apparently occurs for the first time in Nicholas Cusanus. In *De docta ignorantia*, he refers to God as unlimited, unconditioned, and incomparable.² The German *absolut*, like the English cognate "absolute," derives from the past participle of the Latin verb *absolvere*, whose meanings include "to set free." In German philosophy prior to Hegel, the idea of the absolute emerges in a series of stages from the word "absolute" meaning "unlimited" through the idea of subject and object as unlimited and then to the unlimited indifference point underlying and making possible the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. In the process, what was initially an idea of the limitless, literally as the unlimited, reminiscent of the pre-Socratic idea of *apeiron*, for instance, in Anaximander's view of the primary substance as boundless,³ is hypostasized as the actually unlimited.

In German philosophy, Kant is concerned with an initial principle of all knowledge as early as the precritical "Nova Dilucidatio" (1755).⁴ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he mentions "absolute" (*absolut*) as one of the small group of irreplaceable words that must be retained on pain of abandoning the concepts they express.⁵ He uses the word in an extended sense to mean "valid without limit, as opposed to limited or particular validity."⁶ According to Kant, the transcendental concept of reason is valid in an absolute sense.

This hypostasization of the absolute occurs in the later Fichte and in Schelling, Hegel's contemporaries. Like Kant, Fichte uses *absolut* to mean "not relative."⁷ In the initial version of his position, which influenced Hegel's theory, he understands "absolute" in an epistemological sense as "the unlimited." Thus he characterizes his position in the *Jena Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) as a development of the critical philosophy from the principle of the simply unlimited and unlimitable absolute self.⁸ And he remarks that the finite spirit is obliged to posit a necessary *noumenon* for itself, something absolute outside itself, namely, a thing-in-itself.⁹

In the early Fichte, the absolute is a merely ideal concept, which is arrived at through abstraction from the real. He initially distinguishes between the self and the absolute self only to entertain the conception

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of a pure subject, which Kant designates as the transcendental unity of apperception. Fichte later hypostasizes his understanding of the absolute in the wake of the *Atheismusstreit*.

Schelling transforms and hypostasizes Fichte's early conception of the absolute, reshaping what for the latter is an ideal epistemological concept into an ontological principle. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), history emerges as a series of intervening truths of practical philosophy. On this basis, he turns to the ground of the unity between the subjective and objective poles of cognition.

This deduction of history leads directly to the proof that what we have to regard as the ultimate ground of harmony between the subjective and the objective in action must in fact be conceived as an absolute identity; though to think of this latter as a substantial or personal entity would in no way be better than to posit it in a pure abstraction—an opinion that could be imputed to idealism only through the grossest misunderstandings.¹⁰

Schelling elaborates his idea of the absolute in the "Concept of Transcendental Philosophy" (section 1) and in his "Deduction of the Principle Itself" (section 2). The task of transcendental philosophy is to determine the ultimate in knowledge, as "a principle of knowledge within knowledge."¹¹ The required principle is one in which content and form mutually condition each other through reciprocity. We need "to find a point at which the object and its concept, the thing and its presentation, are originally, absolutely and immediately one."¹² This point is, he insists, the condition of the possibility of knowledge.

Schelling further develops his idea of the absolute in two other early works, both of which influenced Hegel: *Exposition of My System of Philosophy* (*Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, 1801) and *Further Expositions from the System of Philosophy* (*Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie*, 1802). In the former, with Spinoza as his model, he proposes a conception of the absolute as an indifference point. Philosophy incarnates the standpoint of reason (*Vernunft*) and knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) as concerns the thing.¹³ Reason is totally indifferent with respect to subjectivity and objectivity.¹⁴ It includes everything, is one and self-identical, and is expressed as an absolute identity ($A = A$). The absolute identity is not the cause of the universe, but the universe itself.¹⁵ Then the absolute is unchangeably defined as total indifference of knowledge and being as well as of subjectivity and objectivity. Difference, hence, can only be posited in respect to what is separated from the absolute, and

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only as it is separated. This is particularity. At the same time, as particularity, the totality is posited. The absolute as absolute is only posited in that it is posited in the particular through quantitative difference, but in the whole with indifference. Totality is just difference in the particular but indifference in the whole. Hence, the absolute is only under the form of totality, and the proposition "quantitative difference in the particulars and indifference in the whole" is the identity of the finite and infinite.[16](#)

In the latter work, Schelling develops a conception of intellectual intuition as the means to knowledge of the absolute. Immediate knowledge of the absolute is defined as speculative knowledge, or the principle and ground of philosophy. Intuition is the setting equal of thought and being, since reality is only in intuition.[17](#) In a separate chapter, he considers "the idea of the absolute" in some detail, distinguishing six main characteristics grouped around the idea of the absolute identity of thought and being.[18](#)

Hegel's view of the absolute, which was influenced by the views of his colleagues, has apparently only rarely been studied in detail.[19](#) It is already present in the *Differenzschrift*. Here he describes reason as the philosophical organ in which the absolute knows itself, but which demands no further founding or grounding outside of itself.

But if the Absolute, like Reason which is its appearance, is eternally one and the same—as indeed it is—then every Reason that is directed toward itself and comes to recognize itself, produces a true philosophy and solves for itself the problem which, like its solution, is at all times the same. In philosophy, Reason comes to know itself and deals only with itself so that its whole work and activity are grounded in itself, and with respect to the inner essence of philosophy there are neither predecessors nor successors.[20](#)

The task, then, of philosophy is to rely on its sole instrument, or reflection as reason, to construct it in consciousness, as it were.

The form that the need of philosophy would assume, if it were to be expressed as a presupposition, allows for a transition from the need of philosophy to the instrument of philosophizing, to reflection as Reason. The task of philosophy is to construct the Absolute for consciousness.[21](#)

Hegel stresses this point a little farther on in the text by insisting that only reflection that reveals the absolute is reason, and only on this basis does reason yield knowledge: "Only so far as reflection has connection with the Absolute is it Reason and its deed a knowing."[22](#)

For Hegel, the absolute serves as the presupposition and the goal of philosophy that expresses the absolute in the form of a philosophical

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system. The need of philosophy—understood objectively as the need for philosophy, or subjectively as what philosophy itself needs—arises from difference, or diversity, which needs to be raised to unity. This presupposes that the absolute is present as well as sought as the product of reason that goes beyond any limitations of any kind.[23](#) Philosophy's task consists in reconciling, or uniting, such aspects as being and non-being, infinity and finitude, necessity and contingency within a structured whole. Reason presents itself as the negative absolute and as the force that posits the opposed objective and subjective totality.[24](#) And knowledge that expresses the absolute is the suspension of antitheses[25](#) through reason, and the conscious identity of the finite and the infinite, the necessary and the free, and so on.[26](#)

In later writings, Hegel restates, further elaborates, but does not basically alter his conception of the absolute. In the *Differenzschrift*, he describes faith as consciousness of the opposition of the finite, or limited, to the absolute, or unlimited.[27](#) In *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), he describes Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte as disparate thinkers who share a philosophy of the intellect, or understanding, for which the absolute is beyond reason.[28](#) Since they maintain the absoluteness of the finite and empirical, and the opposition of the infinite and finite, the absolute appears incomprehensible.[29](#) This results in an idealism of the finite.[30](#)

Hegel studies the absolute in his mature writings, except for the *Philosophy of Right*, where, aside from several references in passing, this topic is not directly addressed.[31](#) His accounts of the absolute, which are difficult to follow in his early writings, only become more difficult to follow in his mature writings. These accounts, which typically occur at the close of a complex discussion, are invariably vague and hard to construe. Not surprisingly, Hegel's own embarrassment when it came to stating clearly and succinctly his conception of the absolute has given rise to a hermeneutical field day, in which conflicting interpretations flourish.

The excuse that Hegel was writing the book under contract with a specified delivery date cannot be made for his difficult accounts of the absolute in the *Science of Logic* and in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In the *Encyclopedia*, he provides substantial accounts of the absolute in the "Encyclopedia Logic" and in the "Philosophy of Spirit," respectively the first and third parts of the work.[32](#) In the first part of the book, he describes the idea as "truth in and for itself—the absolute unity of the Concept and objectivity."[33](#) In the idea, the merely subjective form of the concept and the merely objective given of experience

are united. The idea is, then, twofold, since it expresses the identity of the concept and objectivity and further expresses the relation of the subjective and objective poles, or the concept and objectivity as immediately given.³⁴ This definition is now said to be absolute and, as such, to supersede all previous definitions of the absolute.³⁵

His elaboration of his conception of the absolute idea in nine brief paragraphs is a model of concision, although not necessarily of clarity. The idea that is the unity of the subjective and objective ideas, which takes the idea itself as its object, is "the whole and absolute idea"³⁶ The idea includes both the concept and the object to which it corresponds, and we must also be aware of it. There is nothing beyond the idea that has neither presuppositions nor limits, but is in itself pure form.³⁷

The general function of the absolute in Hegel's epistemology is clear. Throughout his corpus, it is intended to supplement Kant's abstract conception of pure reason through a conception of spirit, or cognition from the subject's perspective. Whereas Kant aims to think individual objects through the understanding, Hegel desires to grasp their interrelation through reason. Following others in the German philosophical tradition, he intends the absolute as an ultimate principle, which is independent of all further principles, to think structured unity, thereby overcoming dichotomy in all its forms through monism.³⁸

The historical perspective still absent in Hegel's initial texts is a striking addition in his mature writings, including the *Phenomenology*. In rethinking the subject as human being, Hegel turns from an analysis of the conditions of experience toward human experience. In introducing a historical dimension to the problem of knowledge, he transforms an account of its abstract conditions into study of how it occurs. Absolute knowledge presupposes that the subject is free and reason is universal. It presupposes as well that the subject-object identity is not limited to, but includes, subjective, objective, and absolute perspectives. To put the same point differently, unlimited knowledge for an unlimited subject presupposes an unlimited object that reveals itself in temporal guise.

Hegel begins his account of absolute knowing by again bringing out the limitations of religion, arising from its reliance on representation. Religion, which relies on a representational, nonconceptual form of thinking, fails to grasp the object conceptually. In revealed religion, the individual has not yet gone beyond consciousness of the object to consciousness of itself, or self-consciousness. This final step only occurs in absolute knowing, the last step in the lengthy discussion. Here the subject grasps that, as human subjects, what we know is finally only our-

selves. This is Hegel's version of Kant's idealist thesis that the condition of knowing is that the subject "produce" its own cognitive object. For Hegel, in absolute knowing we know that we produce our own cognitive object. In an important passage meant to mark the difference between religion and absolute knowing as alternative approaches to the same content, he writes,

The Spirit of revealed religion has not yet surmounted its consciousness as such, or what is the same, its real self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness; Spirit itself as a whole, and the self-differentiated moments within it, fall within representational thinking and in the form [Form] of objectivity. The content of representational thinking is absolute Spirit; and it now only remains to supersede this pure form, or rather, since it belongs to consciousness as such, its truth must already have given itself [sich ergeben haben] in the latter's shapes [Gestaltungen]. This overcoming of the object of consciousness is not to be taken one-sidedly to mean that the object showed itself as returning into the Self, but more specifically to mean not only that the object as such presented itself to the Self as vanishing, but rather that it is the externalization of self-consciousness that posits the thinghood and that this externalization has not merely a negative but a positive meaning, not only for us or in itself, but for self-consciousness itself. (§788, 479*)





As in the inverted world that includes the normal world, Hegel is claiming that self-consciousness includes consciousness within it. Since the subject distinguishes between the object of which he is conscious and himself as conscious of it, consciousness precedes self-consciousness. Once consciousness has been reached, the process of becoming self-conscious requires the subject to draw a distinction in mind between the object and himself, and further to grasp that what is different from himself is himself as externalized. The positive significance of the object for the subject, understood as self-developing consciousness, is that "self-consciousness has equally sublated this externalization and objectivity too, and taken it back into itself, so that it is by itself [bei sich] in its otherness as such" (§788, 479*).

The object is implicitly spiritual in Hegel's sense. It is our object, or an object for human beings in a social world. Yet we only know that our object is spiritual when we know that it is our object, or in a way ourselves. In a passage on the object, Hegel remarks that "it truly becomes a spiritual being for consciousness when each of its individual determinations is grasped as a determination of the Self, or through the just mentioned spiritual relation to them" (§788, 479-480*).

Hegel further considers the object from the perspective of immedi-

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ate consciousness. The same object can be taken in either of three ways: as it is for us; or for-itself, with respect to particular perceptual qualities it may possess; or again as the essence, or universal, which corresponds to the understanding that knows only through universals. These are ways in which "consciousness must know the object as itself" (§789, 480). The same object can further be understood as a shape of consciousness, either as it appears to us or genetically as a series of such shapes that the subject brings together as a single thing.

Hegel now recalls three moments of the previous discussion. For observing reason, which is a nonspiritual moment (since the link between the subject and the object is not yet evident), the object is a merely immediate given culminating in the claim that the "*being of the 'I' is a thing*" (§790, 480). Pure insight and the  **Enlightenment** , from a utilitarian perspective, maintain that "*the Thing is 'I'*" (§791, 481). The immense difference with respect to observing reason is that here we know that the object only is an object for a subject, so that the object "only has significance in relation, only *through the I* and through *its relation to the same*" (§791, 481*). The result of  **Enlightenment**  rationalism is to know that through self-alienation we "produce" a world that is ourselves.

The first two moments correspond to undifferentiated being on the level of sense-certainty and to determinateness for perception. To complete our quest for knowledge, we need to rise to the level of spirit, hence to know the "essence or inner being as Self . . . in *moral self-consciousness*" (§792, 481). Spirit teaches us that what the individual intends to do and in fact does are seamlessly interrelated. The subject's will is realized in objective form in and through its actions. For "the objective moment in which through acting it manifests itself [*sich hinausstellt*] is nothing other than the Self's pure knowledge of itself" (§792, 481-482*).

Hegel now draws the lesson of his threefold analysis of the moments of objectivity as immediate being, becoming other than itself as being for others and for itself, and essence, or universality. Taken together, they are "the moments of which the reconciliation of Spirit with its own consciousness is composed" (§793, 482). They depict the spiritual realization of human individuals in and through action, as a result of which we become aware of ourselves as spirit. "These are the moments of which the reconciliation of Spirit with its own consciousness is composed; by themselves they are separate [*einzeln*], and it is solely their spiritual unity that constitutes the power of this reconciliation" (§793, 482*).

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Action, or practical activity that brings the human being out of itself and into the world, responds to the imperatives of duty in the real context. From the practical perspective, there is a dichotomy between subject and object in which the subject recognizes its duty. Reality only signifies this type of pure knowing. As a result, the merely formal opposition between the person and its object is sublated. For both subject and object are united as distinctions in unity through the third moment of universality, or essence. Here, where we have "the knowledge of 'I' = 'I'," or the identity between the subject that knows itself as object and the object as itself, the individual person is understood as "immediately a pure knowing or a universal" (§793, 482).

For Hegel, "the reconciliation of consciousness with self-consciousness" occurs initially "in religious Spirit, the other time in consciousness itself as such," namely, through representation "in the form of being-in-itself," which has not been conceptualized, and as conceptualized "in the latter in the form of being-*for-itself*" (§794, 482*). This reconciliation is not realized in religion that "gave its object the shape of actual self-consciousness" (§794, 482-483). After religion has done its work, we still lack full self-consciousness of human being "as it is in itself and for itself" (§794, 483*). The entire series reaches closure in the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness. For when this reconciliation has been

accomplished, the real cognitive subject has been comprehended, since we have finally understood ourselves.

In retrospect, the reconciliation between subject and object has already occurred implicitly "in religion, in the return of representation in consciousness, but not in proper form" (§795, 483*). Conceptual reconciliation only occurs in philosophy, where it is "developed and differentiated" through "the simple unity of the Concept" (§795, 483*). The concept is "like all the other moments . . . a *particular shape of consciousness*," such as "the *beautiful soul*," whose particularity is "knowledge of itself, in its pure, transparent, unity" (§795, 483), which still requires realization in the real world. Once again, this amounts to the view that a person only becomes what Hegel calls a self-for-itself who also becomes what he calls a true object.

Retrospectively the concept "has already fulfilled itself on one side in the acting of its self-certain Spirit, on the other in religion" (§796, 484*). The content of religion is the same as that of philosophy. For the concept has reached "*absolute content as content*, or in the form of *representation*, of being other [Anderseins] for consciousness" (§796, 484*). For philosophy, the importance of consciously acting is that the subject "carries out the life of the absolute spirit" (§796, 484*). As con-

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cerns the concept, the final step is that "what happens in principle is at the same time explicitly for consciousness" (§796, 484*), or actually carried out. Through human action, the contradiction between what is the case in principle and in actuality is overcome.

Through this movement of the acting of Spirit,—which in this way for the first time is Spirit, since it is there, it raises [erhebt] its existence in thoughts and through that in absolute opposition, and from that returns into itself,—the simple unity of knowing has come forth as pure universality of knowing, which is self-consciousness. (§796, 485*)

Philosophy surpasses religion precisely because "what, hence, in religion was *content*, or the form of representation of an *other*, the same is here the *Self's own doing* [eignes *Tun des Selbsts*]" (§797, 485*). Everything depends on the real human subject, which cannot know anything wholly different from itself. For "the Concept obliges [verbindet] that the *content* is the *Self's own doing*" (§797, 485*).

Hegel, who has consistently claimed that the series of shapes considered in the *Phenomenology* reaches closure in the concept, which is understood as the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness, now introduces the terms "absolute knowing" and "science." Descartes and Kant typically contend that when we know, we know what is other than ourselves, namely, the independent external world. For Hegel, the highest form of knowledge turns out to be self-knowledge, or knowing oneself in otherness and otherness as oneself. He sees the problem of knowledge as coming to an end in the subject's full conceptual grasp of itself.

This last shape of Spirit—the Spirit which at the same time gives its complete and true content the form of the Self and thereby realizes its Concept as remaining in its Concept in this realization—this is absolute knowing; it is Spirit that knows itself in the shape of Spirit, or a comprehending knowing [das begreifende Wissen]. (§798, 485*)

Hegel explicates this claim through a further remark on the Cartesian concern with certainty. Truth requires certainty as well as self-certainty, or consciousness and self-consciousness, which, in turn, is equivalent to self-knowledge. For the concept to receive objective form, we must surpass religion. This is a version of the familiar idea that we need to translate our ideas into practice. When we do that, when we realize ourselves in what we do, we have philosophical science as Hegel understands it in this book: "Spirit *appearing* to consciousness in this element, or what is here the same, brought forth from it, *is Science*"

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(§798, 486*). In other words, the science of the experience of consciousness turns out to be a rigorous study of how human beings appear to themselves in what they do.

If Hegel has shown that when we know, we know only ourselves, then he is justified in maintaining that "this knowing is a pure *being-for-self* of self-consciousness" (§799, 486). For through their actions, people come to an awareness of the world as given in experience and of themselves. This idea is reinforced through the suggestion that, when we know, "the content is Spirit that traverses [durchläuft] itself [sich selbst] and truly [is] *for itself* as it is in that it has the shape of the Concept in its objectivity" (§799, 486).

This theory obviously depends on human being as the real subject of knowledge. For Hegel, as distinguished from, say, Descartes and Kant, knowledge is a thoroughly historical product. If knowledge depends on human beings, then "Science does not appear . . . before Spirit has come to consciousness of itself," which in turn requires working through the various

shapes of knowledge until the point is reached in which "in this way to equate its *self-consciousness* with its *consciousness*" (§800, 486).

Just as other forms of knowledge precede philosophy, so "the substance that knows," or the knowing subject, "is there earlier than its conceptual form [Begriffsgestalt]" (§801, 486*) that is known. Knowledge is not instantaneous but the result of a process. In retrospect, "cognition [Erkennen]," defined as "the spiritual consciousness for which what is *in itself is*, is only in so far as it is *being for the Self* and is a being of the Self or Concept," which, initially, is "only a poor object [armen Gegenstand]" (§801, 486*). In contrast, the perceptual object is richer. Heidegger bases his theory of truth as disclosure³⁹ on the idea of concealment (*Verborgenheit*). Now sounding like Heidegger, Hegel indicates about the subject's consciousness of the object that "the disclosure [Offenbarkeit] that it has in this is in fact concealment, for substance is still *self-less being* and only the certainty of itself is manifest [offenbar]" (§801, 487*).

On this level, there is an opposition between the subject and the object that has not yet been rendered transparent to thought. Yet later, further on in the cognitive process, as the abstract moments "impel themselves onward [sich selbst weiter treiben], it enriches itself" (§801, 487*). In consequence, the object becomes entirely transparent to subjectivity. Our later views develop on the basis of our earlier views. Our systematic grasp of various objects arises through a self-correcting

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process out of the earlier forms of comprehension. Conceptually, the various moments of knowledge must appear before we can have a synthetic grasp of them as a unity; but from the perspective of consciousness, the whole of which we are not yet aware is prior to the parts of which we only become aware on the way to knowing it. Conceptual comprehension requires a distinction between subject and object that occurs only in existence, or time, that is transcended in comprehension. For Hegel, "Spirit necessarily appears in Time, and it appears in Time just so long as it does not grasp its pure Concept, i.e., does not delete [tilgt] Time" (§801, 487*).

Knowledge depends on time, on human activity in the real world. For "nothing is known that is not in experience [Erfahrung]" that is defined as the conscious unity of subjectivity and objectivity, or as the claim that, as content, Spirit "is *in itself substance*, and therefore an *object of consciousness*" (§802, 487).

Hegel now returns to the familiar idea that we realize ourselves in what we do, which is expressed as the idea that spirit is substance. Cognition is a process recording the transformation of "Substance into Subject" (§802, 488) through which what is initially a mere existent thing is finally taken up into consciousness. The circular cognitive process records a movement from the conscious subject to the object in which it objectifies itself and then back to the subject who comprehends it. For the movement of cognition is a "circle that returns into itself, the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end" (§802, 488). Since this process presupposes the development of substance to become subject, spirit, or subjectivity, must reach its full development in the social context. The relation of religion to science is that "the content of religion proclaims earlier in time than does Science, what Spirit is, but only the latter is its true knowledge of itself" (§802, 488*).

If Science is self-knowledge that can occur only in time, then "the movement, the self-propelling of the form of knowing," or the self-developing human cognitive process, "is the work, which it [i.e., Spirit] achieves as actual history" (§803, 488*). Hegel here indicates the limits of religion with respect to knowledge, perhaps even as such. On reflection, "the religious community" where absolute Spirit appears before philosophy is confronted with what simply opposes it, or "the content of consciousness foreign to it [dem ihm fremden Inhalte seines Bewußtseins]" (§803, 488*). Although he is often understood as primarily a religious philosopher, he clearly maintains that our awareness

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of the limits of religion pushes us beyond religion. As a result, people turn to themselves, or return into self-consciousness.

This return is the first step toward moving from the abstract world to social reality, "of descending from the *intellectual world*, or rather to ensouling its abstract element with the real Self" (§803, 488*). "Observing Reason" brings us only to an immediate, abstract unity of thought and being that, like abstract Oriental substance, leads only to reaffirming

individuality. It is only when we reach the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ conception of utility that grasps all "existence as its will" (§803, 489) that we understand that the world and ourselves are identical. This is illustrated in the Fichtean view that "I = I," which, through the temporal, dynamic conception of the difference between the subject and object, surpasses the Cartesian "unity of Thought and Extension" (§803, 489*).

Since Fichte remains Cartesian, he has not grasped that "the I," or subject, "is not merely the Self, but the *identity of the Self with itself*," which means that the subject is the object, "or *this Subject* is just as much *Substance*" (§803, 489). Substance only counts as "the absolute," or a source of absolute knowing, if the "absolute unity" between subject and object, knobbier and known, is "thought or intuited" (§803, 489). For the other alternative, or knowing what is external to the subject, hence different from it, is indemonstrable. "Knowing might seem to have come from [zu] things, from what is different from itself, and from the difference of a variety of things, without one comprehending how and from where" (§803, 489-490*).

Hegel now briefly describes his alternative view of knowledge from the perspective of the human subject. Knowledge is not possible if the subject separates itself from the world, as in Descartes, or immerses itself in the empirical world, as in Locke and Newton. Knowledge is only possible through a third alternative, namely, this movement of the Self which externalizes and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as Subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it sublates this difference between objectivity and content. (§804, 490*)

This Hegelian alternative approach to knowledge depends on the capacity of the human subject to take a conceptual step back from its surroundings, in effect to become a cognitive subject by putting distance between itself and anything else. This is described as "the Subject's self-differentiation from its substance, or the Concept's self-sepa-

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ration, the going into itself [das Insichgehen] and the becoming of the pure I"; its result is that real content emerges for a subject, since "the Concept of necessity and the rise of Existence, which Substance has as its essence, and which exists for *it*" (§804, 490*).

This step back is also a step toward the content for the subject, what Hegel calls the simple substance defined as the negation of subjectivity, in virtue of which the subject really becomes a subject. For the step back is rather a "movement" through which the subject "that goes down into the simple substance as this negativity and movement for the first time is subject" (§804, 490*).

Hegel now clarifies his alternative through two further points. First, the subject maintains a unity in diversity between the subject that knows and what it knows. For "the power of Spirit lies rather in remaining identical [sich selbst gleich] in its externalization and, as being *in itself* and *for itself*, positing being-for-self in the same way as a moment like being in itself" (§804, 490*). If knowledge is a circular process, then the human subject can know only what in a sense is not independent of, but dependent on, it.

Second, to forestall possible claims that the knowing process is merely subjective, Hegel stresses the way that the subject merely contemplates an object that develops by itself within his consciousness. For "knowing rather consists in a seeming inactivity, which only considers how what is differentiated moves itself and returns into its unity" (§804, 490*).

At this point, the argument of the *Phenomenology* is complete. Hegel now summarizes his entire argument in a passage so compact as to be difficult even to paraphrase. After running through a series of shapes, or moments considered on the way to absolute knowing, the human subject in context, or Spirit, has overcome difference within consciousness, the difference between its object and itself. As a result, "it has won the pure element of its existence, the Concept" (§805, 490*). To emphasize the unity between subject and object, knower and known, the content of the concept is described as "the self-externalizing Self, or the immediate unity of knowing oneself [Sichselbstwissens]" (§805, 490*). Its content, which moves with "necessity," is wholly independent, exists in specific form "as *determinate* [*bestimmter*] in relation," and exhibits self-transformational movement, or "negativity" (§805, 491).

A contrast is now drawn between mere ordinary consciousness and the conceptual development of the object within consciousness in philosophical science. For Hegel, "the movement" exhibits itself no

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longer "as determinate *forms of consciousness*" but rather, since the subject has overcome difference within it, "as *determinate Concepts*, and as their organic movement, grounded in itself" (§805, 491*).

Hegel now seems to look ahead from the *Phenomenology* to the *Science of Logic* he will later write. If the *Phenomenology* is the road to science, as a result of which the concept is reached, the *Logic* is solely concerned with the concept. The former operates with a self-sublating distinction, for "each moment is the difference between knowing and Truth"; whereas the latter, which presupposes the *Phenomenology*, is concerned, not with difference, but with the concept that "unites the objective form of Truth and of the knowing Self in immediate unity" (§805, 491*).

At this point, the previous transitions between consciousness, representation, self-consciousness, and so on, give way to "the pure Concept," whose "onward movement depends solely on its pure *determinateness*" (§805, 491*). Earlier it was repeatedly claimed that religion and philosophy comprehend the same content differently. Hegel now widens the progression leading to philosophy to include a further step from spirit, or the philosophy of spirit he will later expound in the *Encyclopedia*, to philosophy. The contents of spirit and science are equally rich. Yet it is only through "the pure Concepts of Science," recognizable "in the form of shapes of consciousness" that constitute its "reality," that we can know its "essence, the Concept of the *simple* mediation" that is "posited as *thought*" (§805, 491*).

Two conditions must be fulfilled for science. These are "the self-externalization of the pure Concept" within experience and "the passage of the Concept into *consciousness*" (§806, 491*) through which it is known. The subject that knows the concept is in this way certain of itself. Accordingly, it meets the Cartesian criterion for knowledge through self-certainty. As for Descartes, so for Hegel the theory of knowledge starts from a conception of the subject. "The self-knowing Spirit . . . is the beginning, from which we went out" (§806, 491*). Despite the immense amount of terrain covered in this book, the conceptual journey is not yet finished. "The externalization is still incomplete" since it has so far been restricted to "the *relation of Self-Certainty to its object*" but has still not considered nature, which Hegel now cryptically describes, anticipating his Philosophy of Nature in the *Encyclopedia*, as "externalized Spirit, . . . as the eternal externalization of its *continuing to exist [Bestehens]* and the movement that produces the *Subject*" (§807, 492*).

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Hegel has emphasized the link between knowledge and time, but he has said almost nothing directly about history. In the final paragraph of "Absolute Knowing," hence of the *Phenomenology*, he turns briefly to this topic. Referring to nature, he differentiates between it and history in remarking that "the other side of its Becoming, History, is the knowing, self-mediating becoming [Werden]—of spirit externalized in Time, . . . the externalization of itself; the negative is the negative of itself" (§808, 492*). The human historical record presents a slowly moving series of images that are slowly known by human beings. The "fulfillment" of this process consists in human being "perfectly knowing" itself, "its substance," in that the subject returns into itself from existence in order to scrutinize the past as preserved in memory. For the cognitive subject, historical knowledge presupposes retrospective contemplation, or "its withdrawal into itself in which it abandons its existence and turns to recollect [seine Gestalt der Erinnerung übergibt]" (§808, 492*). Now pointing to the uses of the philosophical study of history that he will later discuss in *Reason in History*, he suggests that past existence is preserved in memory. For "the sublated existence, —the previous [existence], but born again through knowing—is a new existence, a new world and form of Spirit" (§808, 492*) that allows us to go forward in new ways. "Recollection [Er-Innerung]," literally "the making inner," preserves what has already taken place.

Miller here misleadingly renders *Bildung* as "new beginning," whereas Hegel has in mind "culture." Hegel takes pains to stress that a later "culture [Bildung] . . . begins again, . . . is at the same time on a higher level" (§808, 492*). For it builds upon, hence surpasses, the experience of its predecessors as preserved in memory. Human beings are motivated through generations by the concern with socially useful knowledge. Casting a glance forward to the *Philosophy of Right*, his last book in which he will develop his political theory, he connects knowledge, politics, and history. In a final passage, he stresses the social usefulness of philosophy that, in comprehending the human past, helps us to know ourselves and to ameliorate society.

The goal, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit knowing itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they perfect [vollbringen] the organization of their realm. The preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; but regarded from the side of their comprehended organization, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance. (§808, 493*)

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Chapter 9

Hegel's Phenomenology as Epistemology

I have argued, against those who detect little or even no rigor in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, that it proposes a rigorously expounded, unified theory of knowledge.¹ It is not difficult to perceive the unity of the *Phenomenology* if we approach it, following the indications in the text, as an epistemological theory terminating in absolute knowing. In remarks on the various chapters, I have provided the bases for a unitary interpretation of Hegel's phenomenological theory. At the risk of some repetition, it will be useful now to show the unity of Hegel's exposition that runs from cognition (*Erkennen*) to absolute knowing.

What is Hegel's theory? Kant's critical philosophy combines empirical realism and transcendental idealism. Like Kant, Hegel defends views of empiricism and idealism. He further offers a revised view of the subject as spirit, which is his central contribution to epistemology.

There is no standard view of "empiricism." Empiricism is frequently linked with realism, which is often understood in contrast either to nominalism (as concerns the problem of universals) or to idealism (for Kant, the problem of the independence of the external world). If we regard empiricism as the doctrine that experience, rather than reason, is the source of knowledge, then it is opposed to rationalism, understood as the theory that knowledge derives from reason.² A minimal view of empiricism is that the senses are the source of knowledge. Empiricists typically hold that knowledge concerns an external object in its externality.

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Empiricism defined as knowledge of external objects links Kant to Francis Bacon. In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant added a motto taken from Bacon's *Great Instauration* (*Instauratio Magna*). Bacon, who is widely regarded as the founder of modern science in England, typically maintains that knowledge requires careful observation of nature to avoid distortions introduced by the mind. For "all depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed upon the facts of nature and so receiving their images simply as they are."³

From an empiricist perspective, Kant refutes forms of idealism that hold that "the existence . . . of an actual object outside me . . . is never directly given in perception."⁴ He maintains that we are immediately aware of external sense objects. He denies that our experience is limited to the experience of internal states on the grounds that external objects are directly perceived.

There are different kinds of empiricism. The first kind, exemplified by Bacon, Locke, and many others, is roughly the claim that knowledge begins with and arises out of experience. Kant denies this claim in maintaining that knowledge begins with but does not necessarily arise out of experience. He clearly remains an empiricist. He maintains that the content of knowledge derives from experience, although at the cost of introducing a distinction between objects of thought that are not experienced and cannot be known and objects of experience and knowledge that are known. For Kant, we do not and cannot know independent external objects. In Kant's "constructivist" view, we must "construct" the object as a condition of knowing it.

The primary form of empiricism features the claim that knowledge begins with and arises out of experience through experience of independent objects. The secondary form of empiricism features the claim that knowledge begins with but does not arise out of experience, since we in fact experience and know only objects dependent on us. As illustrated in the critical philosophy, the key feature of this form of empiricism is the distinction between objects of thought and objects of perception. "Experience" is here used in two different

senses: with respect to the source of cognitive content through sensation, as distinguished from perception, and with respect to perceptual objects.

Kant's theory of knowledge depends on a claim for the relation of objects of experience and knowledge, or appearances, and mere objects of thought, or things in themselves. We never know independent objects directly, since they cannot be given in experience; but we know them indirectly through their effect on objects that are given in experience.

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Hegel objects to the claimed relation between perceptual objects and anything outside perception, such as an independent external world. He accepts Kant's view that knowledge begins with, but does not arise out of, experience. Like Kant, he denies immediate knowledge in favor of mediate knowledge. In that sense, like Kant and other idealists he is an empiricist. He, however, rejects the idea that through what is given directly in experience, we can know what lies outside it. He defends a tertiary form of empiricism in which knowledge begins with but does not arise in experience, and does not refer to anything further than what is given in experience.

The difference between the various forms of empiricism can be indicated as follows. Primary, or English, empiricism claims direct knowledge of an independent object. Secondary, or Kantian, empiricism claims that we only experience and know dependent objects. It features indirect knowledge of an independent object through a dependent object at the price of distinguishing between objects dependent on and independent of us. Tertiary empiricism follows secondary empiricism in restricting experience to dependent objects while denying, here disagreeing with secondary empiricism, that we can know objects independent of us. Tertiary empiricism accepts Kant's claim that we know only objects that we ourselves "produce" while denying knowledge of anything else beyond experience. As concerns empiricism, Hegel accepts Kant's view of phenomena, but he denies they are appearances in eliminating any reference to things in themselves, construed as mere objects of thought.

What I am calling tertiary empiricism provides a helpful clue to Hegel's theory of cognition. In the introduction, he maintains that knowledge does not depend on an indemonstrable correspondence with an independent object; it rather depends on the relation of our view of the object with the object of that view as it is experienced, that is, within the subject's mind. For there to be knowledge, three conditions must be met: the cognitive subject and object must coincide; this must occur for a subject; and it must occur within consciousness.

The key point is obviously the claim that we can never go beyond our view of an external object to the object of the view other than as it appears to the subject within consciousness. In the introduction, Hegel argues for this point in two ways through an examination of Kant's arguments in the "Transcendental Analytic" and in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For if cognition is an instrument, we can never isolate what it adds to the object from the independent object as it is. And if cognition is a medium, we can never

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isolate the object from the medium through which it appears. Theories that require us to go beyond the object as it appears to the independent external object, or to the object as it is in independence of us, must end in skepticism. An example is Kant's critical philosophy that distinguishes between the thing in itself and its appearance, the object of thought and the object of experience, but cannot relate one to the other.

In the chapter on consciousness, Hegel elaborates his polemic against primary empiricism, which Kant rejects, as well as against Kant's secondary form of empiricism. He distinguishes three levels of consciousness: sense-certainty, perception, and force and understanding. This triple distinction loosely follows the contours of the critical philosophy, where Kant distinguishes between an immediate given (or the contents of the sensory manifold), the appearance that is given in perception, and the relation between appearances and what appears that he addresses in his theory of the understanding.

Sense-certainty concerns the immediate given, or input of knowledge. Like Kant, Hegel rules out the very idea of immediate knowledge from experience, hence rules out primary empiricism. In noting that we cannot even pick out particulars other than ostensibly, whereas language in which we do so naturally refers universally, he turns attention to universal claims to know. In rejecting the idea of an uninterpreted given, he is very close to others who hold this view.⁵ In passing, Hegel further undercuts the efforts of recent sense

data theorists, distant successors of classical British empiricists, to reconstruct perceptual objects out of uninterpreted sensa.⁶

Perception, the second level of consciousness, loosely corresponds to the Kantian view of perceptual experience of phenomena, in his language, to the objects of experience and knowledge. Perception explores the conscious apprehension of the object as a series of qualities, or universals, as an analogue of the Aristotelian view of the thing with many properties. In modern philosophy, the lengthy controversy about the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, illustrated by Descartes's famous wax example, was intended to distinguish qualities intrinsic to the object from those dependent on the perceiver. Like Kant, Hegel holds that what we experience is never immediate but always mediated through the mind.

Hegel studies this idea on the third level of consciousness, force and understanding, in all likelihood a precise reference to the views of Newton and to Kant. In his difficult analysis of the inverted world, Hegel

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depicts their views as related. A main aim of the critical philosophy is to found natural science. As Hegel correctly notes, from the Kantian perspective Newton's antimetaphysical type of empiricism (according to which his theory of natural science is directly derived from experience) is included within the critical philosophy.

"Force and Understanding" addresses two problems remaining from the previous discussion. As Kant already points out, and Hegel further maintains, we require a theory of the unity of the cognitive object as a condition of cognition. Discussion on the level of sense-certainty and perception fails to show the relation between sensation and perception, between the fact that the object is and what it is, between its existence and its properties. Unless the object forms a perceptual unity, it cannot be known. And if a claim to know concerns an external object, we need to show that its appearance in fact "represents" the way the object is.

Hegel pursues both problems in a complex discussion. Earlier he has, like Kant, stressed the way that the cognitive subject "constitutes its object." In elaborating this point, the cognitive subject becomes central to his epistemological theory. The unity of the object of experience and knowledge is due to the subject to which it appears as unified. Experience occurs on the level of consciousness. The more difficult question is whether and how to go from the phenomenon, given in conscious experience but understood as an appearance, to what appears without going beyond the limits of consciousness.

Beginning with Descartes and continuing with Kant, representational theories of knowledge typically depend on views of causality, where what is represented is understood as in some sense "causing" its representation. For instance, Kant's thing-in-itself can without contradiction be understood as a cause of which the phenomenon can without contradiction be understood to be an effect. In the more usual types of representational theory of knowledge, we are driven beyond consciousness, hence beyond the limits of experience, to what is inferred to exist as a condition of experience and to which what is experienced is supposedly connected through laws.

In this respect, Hegel, who has in mind Newtonian mechanics, makes four points. First, since such laws are general, they are not specific. Similar but opposing strategies have been elaborated in science and in philosophy. Newton invokes a theory of gravitation to deduce the planetary orbits as given in experience. Kant appeals to the understanding to "deduce," or to "expound," the very possibility of objects of experience and knowledge. Although both rely for their respective

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explanations on laws, neither Newton nor Kant "explains" particulars. It is not enough to say with Galileo that objects fall at a speed that is a function of the time they have been falling, since, for Hegel, we must further account for the particular object. Hegel here suggests a standard of explanation that apparently surpasses anything compatible with natural science as we know it.

Second, an approach to knowledge based on representation of an object outside consciousness leads to dualistic efforts to explain what is given in experience by transcending it. But if knowledge is limited to what is given in the experience of consciousness, we can

never know anything beyond it, or more precisely we can never know that we know anything beyond consciousness. Hence the Kantian approach leads to skepticism.

Third, we cannot understand a phenomenon as an appearance since, as already noted, we cannot relate it to what appears. No inference is possible from the object as it appears to the object as it is, or from appearance to an external reality, or finally from consciousness to anything outside it.

Fourth, when we go beyond the plane of perception to "see" the object as it is, we find there only ourselves. In other words, we are ourselves at the root of our own knowledge. In this way, Hegel draws the consequence of Kant's claim that we must "produce" our cognitive object in order to know it in remarking that what we finally know is only ourselves.

Hegel's analysis of consciousness reveals three stages in the phenomenological experience of objects: initially as mere, featureless existence, which is directly given in sensation; then as a congeries of properties that are given in perception; and finally as an unavailing theoretical effort to relate the first two stages. Consciousness focuses on primary and secondary forms of empiricism in the context of an empirical approach to the cognitive object. His rejection of primary and secondary empiricism, but not empiricism, is motivated by the fact that we cannot formulate a satisfactory account of knowledge through an account of an independent cognitive object; and we cannot formulate a satisfactory account of knowledge for a dependent cognitive object without an adequate account of the subject.

The lesson of "Consciousness" derives from a demonstrable failure to understand knowledge through a minimalist conception of the subject common in modern philosophy, with the obvious exception of the British empiricists, from Descartes to Kant. Hegel correctly sees that

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the solution is not to abandon the approach to objectivity through subjectivity. It is rather to pay close attention to the subject of experience.

The British empiricists, particularly Locke and Hume, approach knowledge through conceptions of human being. Although Hegel wrote about the British empiricists, he seems not to have been influenced by them in the formulation of his own view of subjectivity. As concerns the subject, the mediating figure between Kant and Hegel is certainly Fichte. In the wake of the French Revolution, Fichte innovates in reconceiving the subject as human being.

The chapters "Self-Consciousness," "Reason," and "Spirit" each study successive aspects of the cognitive subject as human being. Hegel analyzes self-consciousness as the initial phase of an extension of the theory of knowledge beyond consciousness. His theory depends on Descartes, Fichte, and others. From the former, he takes the idea that knowledge depends on the subject, but he rejects the associated foundationalist epistemological strategy. From Fichte, he takes the idea that knowledge begins in self-consciousness. Kant makes consciousness depend on objects of experience and knowledge. Fichte inverts Kant's argument in maintaining that when I am conscious, I am always self-conscious. Since there is no consciousness without self-consciousness, self-consciousness underlies and explains consciousness.

For Hegel as for Kant, Descartes, and many others, a necessary condition of knowledge is freedom that Hegel understands under the heading of self-consciousness. Hegel's innovation lies in linking what Descartes called self-certainty, or self-consciousness, namely, the freedom required for knowledge, and hence knowledge itself, to social conditions. It follows that neither self-consciousness nor, hence, freedom is a given, always present, or present from the start. Since the real conditions for knowledge are social, they are only realized in the course of human history. In locating the conditions of self-consciousness in society, Hegel shows how to reconceive the cognitive subject as social human being, in effect to rethink knowledge on a social basis.

As for consciousness, there are levels of self-consciousness, degrees in our awareness of ourselves, whose highest level, or mutual recognition, apparently depends on a basic change in social organization. The type of self-consciousness possible at any given moment is a function of the society in which it occurs. Hegel specifically considers the real conditions and historical record of the emergence of self-consciousness in human history. In relations of inequality typical of modern society, most of us are no more than partially self-aware, hence no more than

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partially capable of anything approaching objective knowledge. Full self-consciousness, or mutual recognition, presupposes social equality that is qualitatively different from mere legal equality.

Hegel's remarks on stoicism, skepticism, and unhappy consciousness are intended, not as an exhaustive list of types of self-consciousness, but rather to identify philosophical and religious views of the cognitive subject that have so far emerged in human history. Stoicism depends on abstraction from the world. Skepticism rests on the denial of the reality of the world. The unhappy consciousness supposes the denial of oneself. The extent of freedom of so-called free self-consciousness is in each case severely limited, even minimal, since each subject is free only to the extent that it negates itself or its surroundings. None of these initial figures of free self-consciousness provides more than a minimal grasp of anything like real human freedom within the social context.

We can summarize the discussion so far in two points. First, consciousness is insufficient to yield an adequate theory of knowledge, which requires a reflexive dimension, or grasp of self-consciousness, hence a theory of real human subjectivity. Second, analysis of self-consciousness, although necessary for objective knowledge, is insufficient. It does not follow that (because knowledge requires a subject conscious of itself) if we are self-conscious, then we also have knowledge about anything other than ourselves. We still lack an account of subjectivity that is rich enough to understand how human beings can know, in other words an account of how objective cognition occurs within the framework of real human subjectivity. We have acquired an abstract framework for the genesis of self-consciousness, hence of human freedom necessary for human knowledge. Yet nothing has so far been said about the conceptual frameworks within which the free subject required for knowledge can grasp its cognitive object.

There is an important distinction between our understanding of the subject, and hence knowledge, as intrinsically social and an identification of the various conceptual patterns, or perspectives on knowledge, in practice guiding our efforts to arrive at claims to know. To begin to elaborate our grasp of the subject beyond the rather elementary view gained in self-consciousness, Hegel studies reason, a traditional philosophical concern, in a series of chapters that comprise the remainder of the book.

In coming to grips with reason, Hegel comes to grips with a main philosophical theme, with the main cognitive instrument, and with Kant. In the critical philosophy, Kant develops a version of the tradi-

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tional Greek view of human being as a rational animal (*zoon logon echon*) that he, however, isolates from the social context that is central in the Greek discussion.⁷ In his study of types of reason, Hegel further elaborates his understanding of the cognitive subject as social, hence as linked to the social and historical context.

The discussion runs from more theoretical to more practical forms of reason. "Observing Reason," as the name suggests, features real human being that is concerned to grasp its object through observation. When Hegel was writing, the distinction between philosophy and science was not yet fully drawn. Newton, for instance, still refers to science as natural philosophy. Kant tries to justify natural science on an a priori basis. Hegel, who thinks of philosophy and science as continuous, regards natural science as partially observational in character, as concerned in the first place with rigorous description, for instance, taxonomy, and as only secondarily concerned with theory that is not needed for coherent description.

In "Observing Reason," Hegel studies inorganic and organic natural objects, including the subject, what we now call psychology, and refutes contemporary psychological pseudoscience. As concerns biology, many of the details of his discussion are now out of date. In a Darwinian age, Hegel's antievolutionism is difficult to defend. It is easier to defend his antireductionism that directly contradicts contemporary physicalism. Hegel's denial that organic phenomena can be captured through physical laws symbolizes his resistance to reductionism of all kinds. The same point is illustrated in his refutation of the contemporary pseudosciences physiognomy and phrenology.

Our conception of natural science is obviously normative. In Hegel's day as in our own, the refutation of contemporary pseudoscience is an important part of science, most recently in debates about creationism, cold fusion, and so on. Hegel's refutation of physiognomy and phrenology, two false sciences of the day, is specifically interesting at present. In anticipating arguments later raised against physicalist and materialist approaches to mind, it obviously

belongs to the ongoing process of separating the scientific wheat from the pseudoscientific chaff.

Observation concerns the theoretical aspect of reason. In the actualization of rational self-consciousness through its own activity, Hegel addresses a practical form of human reason. Like Kant and Fichte, he privileges practice over theory, the practical over the theoretical. Like Fichte, he refuses to separate theory and practice, in Kantian terms the theoretical and the practical forms of knowledge. The practical realm,

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which is not exhausted in responding to the questions of morality, encompasses human social comportment in all its many aspects.

The general theme of human self-realization in the practical sphere presupposes a conception of potentiality⁸ elaborated by Aristotle in Greek antiquity. For Aristotle, human being is rational as well as political.⁹ Subordinating ethics to politics, he sees life as realized in the political arena, what we now call society. Distantly following Aristotle, Hegel has constantly in mind a view of human beings as realizing their capacities in what they do. Society forms the real basis for human life, including knowledge of all kinds.

Hegel considers the practical consequences of two main views of human self-realization. Individual self-realization founders on the inevitable conflict between the individual and social reality, or between the individual and other people. The Kantian view, which focuses on strict application of universalizable moral principles in substituting rigid obedience for human self-realization, is self-stultifying for two reasons. First, universal principles binding on particular individuals cannot be formulated; and, second, proposed principles are unfailingly empty. Although human beings are intrinsically social, neither view of human subjectivity comprehends them in the sociohistorical context. Accordingly, Hegel turns to a richer conception, with obvious roots in Greek antiquity, of human action as intrinsically teleological. We must comprehend a person as acting teleologically to realize universal goals through action within the social context.

This theory is initially stated by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Hegel's version of that theory is his view of spirit, the central idea in the *Phenomenology* and in his view of epistemology. We see here the fruits of Hegel's dissatisfaction with the abstract Kantian approach to knowledge through pure reason as early as the *Differenzschrift*, which culminates in a view of spirit, or impure, concrete reason. It is a mark of Hegel's philosophical genius of the highest order that he responds to the requirements of epistemological theory through a novel comprehension of the real human subject.

It is unfortunate, since spirit is a central Hegelian concept, certainly central to his phenomenological theory of cognition, that (with the possible exception of the last chapter, "Absolute Knowing") its exposition is perhaps also the most defective part of the *Phenomenology*, simply insufficient for the magnitude of the task. It is especially unfortunate, if Hegel regards cognition as the main theme of the book, that he does not do more to bring out the relevance of spirit for his view of knowledge, or even to clarify it.

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The difficulty in even comprehending Hegel's conception of spirit is due as much to its overdetermined nature as to his problems in expounding an idea at the epicenter of his theory that, for this reason, cannot be explained through anything else. At the very least, his conception of spirit is determined by his concern with epistemology, by his need to provide a positive model of subjectivity, by prior philosophical discussion of spirit, by his religious background, and by his concern to respond to such thinkers as Descartes, Kant, and Fichte. Obviously, it is not simple to expound a concept that lies at the conceptual confluence of so many aspects of Hegel's complex theory.

Hegel's idea of spirit draws on both religious and secular sources. The obvious religious source is the well-known, but scarcely developed, Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, roughly reconciliation through the immanence of divine spirit in the human community. Hegel reads the Protestant Reformation as showing how individuals became aware of their reconciliation without priests, hence without authority. He sees the Lutheran insight into free spirit as leading to the Cartesian idea of free thought, thereby imparting a specifically epistemological twist to an originally religious conception.

Many secular thinkers take part in the effort over centuries to rethink the Christian view of Holy Spirit (which is intended, within a religious framework, to mediate the relation

between human being and God) as a mediating factor between individuals within a social setting. Obvious secular influences on Hegel's view include Rousseau, Montesquieu, Herder, and Fichte. Rousseau's famous political conception of the general will (*volonté générale*) implies the spirit of a people. This idea emerges explicitly in Montesquieu (*génie d'une nation, esprit général*), Herder, and Fichte, all thinkers who employ a conception of spirit to capture the shared characteristic of a people. For Hegel, human beings are spirit, which can be understood not as pure but as impure reason, or reason within the sociohistorical context.

Here at last is Hegel's view of the cognitive subject as spirit, or as human being that is always and necessarily situated in a human community, at a given historical moment. Epistemologically, spirit is a further form of Hegel's antifoundationalist view, which is already advanced in the *Differenzschrift*. There he refused his contemporary Reinhold's form of foundationalism in arguing that knowledge is not linear but intrinsically circular. His suggestion that claims to know are justified through the progressive elaboration of the theory (but not initially, as Descartes and other epistemological foundationalists maintain) provides a way of declining foundationalism while avoiding skepticism.

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In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops this idea. Here he suggests that knowledge claims are not transcendental. Hence they are never "true" in an ahistorical sense. Knowledge claims are rather dependent on human subjects, whose theories emerge within, and depend on, the mutable social context. As our context changes, our views of knowledge, including our views of what counts as knowledge, also change. Since knowledge depends on an intrinsically social subject, it cannot escape from history. Human knowledge is intrinsically historical in two senses, since it reflects the historical context in which it arises and since it is always subject to further modification when and if prevailing ideas change.

Hegel's view of knowledge as intrinsically historical is the result of his careful reading of the prior philosophical tradition, on which he consciously builds. Descartes contributes the idea of free thought that Hegel depicts as the Protestant principle and the insight that we know only from the perspective of the subject. The modern philosophical tradition literally turns on Descartes's insight that subjectivity is the necessary condition of objective cognition.

Later modern views of knowledge develop out of the reaction to Descartes. Yet prior to Hegel, there was no plausible idea of the cognitive subject that was instead depicted in a series of fictitious epistemo-logical posits as the Cartesian cogito, the Lockean tabula rasa, the Humean bundle of perceptions, the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, and so on.

Each of these ideas of the subject has its merits. Locke makes a qualified return to Plato's view in the *Theaetetus*. Hume improves on Descartes, and Kant on Hume. Yet none of these writers provides anything like a plausible view of the human subject that is neither simply passive nor an evanescent bundle of perception nor a bare 'I think' accompanying our representations.

The obvious advantage of Hegel's approach is to explain human knowledge from the perspective of the human subject. His idea of spirit meets the Cartesian requirement of free thought through an account of the historical emergence of self-consciousness. It further respects Kant's view that we only know what we "make" while clarifying its mysterious nature.

Through his view of human being as spirit, Hegel formulates a theory of knowledge, whose cognitive subject is none other than real human beings. It is a measure of the difficulty of understanding his theory that it has been so severely misunderstood, even by those well placed to grasp its significance. An example is Lukács, who famously accuses

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Hegel of substituting a mythological concept for human being, of failing to grasp the real historical subject.¹⁰

For Hegel, the modern individual is aware that he realizes himself in what he does, knows himself accordingly, and knows what he does. The spiritual dimension is manifest in the ethical life of the nation, which is based on laws that are the basis of modern life. Hegel stresses the practical nature of the human subject, which is "caught up," or "situated," in the real world in which we are called upon to act. In his account of true spirit and ethics, he contrasts ethics to Kantian morality that he has previously criticized in some detail. He elaborates his view of human beings as immanent in the sociocultural world that they produce through their actions. He sketches a theory of individuals, who are called upon to act in

imperfect situations in part beyond human control, and who realize their purposes in their actions. Society instantiates human law that is based on so-called divine law. The latter concept is understood, not from a religious perspective, but as the unwritten law illustrated in the family and generally accepted within a given social context.

We have already noted that it is the nature of human being as a political animal to live in a state. The exposition of true spirit and ethics reveals that and how people produce the sociopolitical context that is the theater of their actions. As human beings, we are not transcendent to, but immanent in, our world. The fact that we ourselves produce our social context justifies the idealist thesis that in knowing we know only ourselves.

Hegel further elaborates this idea in his exposition of self-alienated spirit and culture or education. Etymologically *Bildung*, which means both "culture" and "education," points to *Bild*, meaning "picture" or "image." We recall Plato's mimetic theory of culture, in particular his views of poetry and art as narrative imitations of reality that was central at least as late as the romantics.¹¹ Hegel understands "culture" in a wider way, to include not only poetry and art but also the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞, the French Revolution, and so on; in a word, whatever we ourselves produce through self-alienation, or self-objectification. In employing the term "Bildung," he suggests that we educate ourselves about the world and ourselves in a sociohistorical context that is an image (although not necessarily in the sense of a faithful, say, photographic, sense) of who we are. As a manifestation of the human spirit, culture has an important epistemological function that is only magnified in philosophy, its highest form.

Culture in the widened, Hegelian sense of the term includes orga-

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nized religion, the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞, and the French Revolution. Hegel studies the opposition between reason and faith in the concrete context provided by the conflict between organized religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, and the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ reaction against religion. His remarks on faith and pure insight exhibit the limits of each with respect to social reality. Like Kantian morality, which is a laicized version of religion, the former has no content at all, whereas the latter trades in abstract ideas that ignore the real world. The struggle of the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ with superstition turns on its depiction of religion from a utilitarian perspective that religion rejects. The truth of the ☞ **Enlightenment** ☞ lies in its turn toward utility as the only practical criterion. Yet the concern with utility is thwarted in the great French Revolution, where the interest in absolute freedom tragically led to the famous terror. Hegel's analysis brings out an interesting connection between the abstract character of the Kantian theory of morality and the self-stultifying nature of the greatest political event of modern times. Like faith, both simply ignore, or "negate," the social world.

Hegel drives this point home in his analysis of spirit certain of itself and morality. He is concerned here with three attitudes toward practical action that emerged as successors to the abstract Kantian view in the postrevolutionary world. In comparison to the seamless unity between the ethical individual and his world, he discerns a failure to integrate the moral subject with its world, with moral self-determination (or with insight), and with social reality in general. His remarks on the moral view of the world renew his earlier critique of Kantian morality by exposing the conflict between duty and reality. His remarks on displacement discuss the effort, ingredient in the Kantian model of morality, to consider social reality as in effect a mere fiction. The closing comments on conscience and the beautiful soul bring out the emptiness of the romantic view of the self as all reality, which is intended as a successor to the Kantian moral view of the equally abstract subject as wholly self-determining without regard to the real external world.

The exposition of spirit completes the long inquiry into the nature of the cognitive subject that was begun in the chapter on self-consciousness and was continued in the chapter on reason. The result, as we have said many times and in different ways, is a theory of the cognitive subject as spirit, or as real human being. This new, "thick" view of the cognitive subject is intended to replace the various "minimalist" conceptions of subjectivity that emerge in the accounts of knowledge from Descartes to Kant.

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In the chapters on religion and absolute knowing, Hegel returns from the cognitive subject to its object to expound the nature of knowledge from the spiritual perspective of real human being. The chapter on religion continues the broadly epistemological treatment of cultural phenomena. Hegel shares the generally German idealist emphasis on

Vernunftreligion, or religion from a rationalist angle of vision, more concerned with a rational approach to religion than with faith. Religion figures in this book as a form of knowledge, not as a way for human beings to return to God.

Spirit is both a philosophical as well as a religious concept that emerged in religion long before it was imported into philosophy. The religious association of spirit should not lead to the frequent, but mistaken, view of Hegel, still current in philosophically right-wing Hegelian circles, as a basically religious thinker. Like the other great post-Kantian German idealists, he turns not from philosophy to religion; rather he turns from religion to philosophy. His theory of knowledge is, and should be understood as, wholly secular. Although he analyzes religious phenomena in detail, his epistemological theory is neither a religious theory of knowledge nor, other than incidentally, a theory of religious knowledge.

Hegel's exposition of religion as an approach to knowledge addresses the familiar scholastic problem of the relation of reason and faith. Like Kant, he regards claims to knowledge based on assertions of certainty, in fact all claims that fail to demonstrate their truth, as essentially dogmatic. Like Aquinas, Hegel holds that religion and philosophy, faith and reason, do not essentially conflict. Thomism ultimately subordinates reason to faith, since a philosophical theory that conflicts with Christianity (which is accepted on the basis of revelation) is necessarily false. For Hegel, who inverts their relation, religion presents at best an incomplete view of conceptual, or philosophical, knowledge.

The chapters on religion and absolute knowing with which the book ends provide different approaches to the same cognitive object. For Hegel, religion, like Kant's view of cognitive objects as appearances, offers no more than a mere representation of its object. Religion represents what it cannot know, since representation falls short of conceptual thought, which is restricted to philosophy. The content of religion is finally known only in philosophy.

Religion and philosophy are concerned with the same object, since knowledge is one. In the same way, different religions are different aspects of the one true religion. Hegel surveys different kinds of religion,

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including pre-Christian religions and Christianity. He begins with natural religion, his term for early forms of religion that supposedly correspond to human nature. Under this heading, he treats ancient Persian and Eastern religions that reach their highest point in the unreflective, mechanical form of artifice he detects in Islam.

In natural religion, God is represented as a thing. In religion as art, Hegel's term for the art of ancient Greece, human being is represented as divine. For Hegel, who participated in the veritable German intellectual cult of Greek civilization, Greek artistic production represents a high point of the human spirit. Applying his view that we know ourselves in our deeds, he contends that in Greek art we become aware of ourselves. This claim is a special case of his general comprehension of culture as a form of self-alienation.

Hegel's treatment of the two main forms of pre-Christian religion focuses on the cognitive function of religious art. In revealed religion, we finally reach Christianity that illustrates the view of spirit as self-knowledge through self-alienation in the threefold development of the Holy Trinity. Christianity represents the significance of the crucifixion for the religious community, its representation in thought, and finally its representation in self-consciousness.

Absolute knowing (*absolutes Wissen*), which finally comprehends what religion only represents, is the final link in the tightly woven conceptual chain beginning in cognition (*Erkennen*). Hegel's conception of absolute knowledge is widely misunderstood, even by Hegel scholars. It has only the most tenuous link to epistemological certainty¹² that Hegel simply rejects as a criterion in his critique of Descartes. It is not related to the alleged self-knowledge of God as manifest in the world. Nothing in Hegel's text or in the logic of his argument supports such a "Diltheyan" reading of his theory. Wilhelm Dilthey did important work on Hegel.¹³ His rejection of absolute knowing in favor of a theory of historical consciousness was enormously productive. It led inter alia to Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity and Gadamer's view of the efficacy of history on the formation of consciousness. But it is, nonetheless, a misunderstanding.

The difficulty of grasping the epistemological import of Hegel's claim for absolute knowing is further complicated by the complex debate about the absolute in post-Kantian idealism, beginning in Fichte and continuing in Schelling. Hegel's well-known criticism of

Schelling's absolute does not even remotely justify a Schellingian reading of his own view of this concept. For his objection is raised on epis-

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temological grounds, whereas Schelling's absolute is ontological in nature.

The force of the claim for absolute knowing obviously derives from the term "absolute." Here the relation to Kant is helpful. Starting in the mid-1790s, Hegel was concerned to think the critical philosophy through to the end, if necessary even against Kant. This yields two clues toward understanding Hegel's view of absolute knowing. First, there is Kant's employment of "absolute" in a strictly epistemological manner to mean "not relative," or "unlimited." Second, there is Hegel's concern in the *Phenomenology* to arrive at a view of the cognitive subject as a real human being, or spirit. What Hegel understands as the absolute subject, or the view of the subject that only emerges when the conception of subjectivity in the modern tradition has finally been thought through, is the real human being that is aware and self-aware that it is situated in a social context.

Absolute knowing is, then, nothing more or less than knowledge from the perspective of human being, or spirit. This is the "thick" conception of subjectivity that for Hegel replaces the "minimalist" conceptions everywhere in modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant and later in Husserl and others. One might suppose that, in basing claims to knowledge on a theory of human nature, Hume is on the right track. Yet his minimalist account of human being is too weak to sustain claims to knowledge, and results in skepticism. What is correct is the insight, which Hegel assuredly shares, that a theory of knowledge presupposes a conception of human subjectivity on which to base it.

Absolute knowing is absolute, since it is knowing from the perspective of the real human subject, who thinks within the context of a surrounding community constituting the conceptual framework within which claims to know emerge and are "justified." Religion, which helps us to understand the human subject within a community, lacks full awareness of the cognitive subject. Since religion typically subordinates human beings to the divine, it cannot reach full awareness of people as free; hence it cannot make the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness; and it cannot acknowledge that, in knowing, we finally know only ourselves.

Hegel drives this latter idea home by reviewing the differences between mere observation, pure insight, and spirit. On the observational level, reason is basically nonspiritual, since the underlying unity between the cognitive subject and the object is not perceived. It is later recognized through pure insight, which is typical of the ☒

Enlightenment ☒ form

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of reason that comes down to mere utility for human beings. It is finally fully acknowledged on the level of spirit, where the human subject perceives a seamless link between its intentions and its actions, between the world and itself.

Spirit brings about a reconciliation of self-consciousness and consciousness, practically in the way that in our actions we do what we intend and theoretically in our awareness that this is the case. In both instances, knowledge is universal: practically, since the intentions motivating our actions, like the language in which they are expressed, are necessarily universal; and theoretically, since thought, like language, is itself universal. Theoretical knowledge is always knowledge of the universal and never knowledge of the particular. Since we only become aware of ourselves as spirit as the result of a long meditation on previous shapes of consciousness, our understanding of knowledge and knowledge itself are inextricably linked to history.

Cognition requires self-awareness in which real human beings grasp the cognitive object through reason. In Hegel's terms, this is equivalent to the cognitive subject taking itself as its object. The only objects we have are those given in conscious experience, and we know when the concepts by which we seek to know coincide with those instantiated by our objects. When there is knowledge, we, as human cognitive subjects, find reason, or ourselves, in the object. In distinguishing between substance, or object, and subject, or cognitive subject, we can say that at the point at which the subject grasps the object as it is in consciousness, substance becomes subject.

Chapter 10

An Epistemological Coda

Hegel's contribution to epistemology traditionally receives little attention in the Hegel literature and even less in the mainstream philosophical discussion that, since Parmenides, has steadily focused on the problem of knowledge. One of the ways to distinguish between important and unimportant thinkers is that the reception of the former extends over a long period, for the few singularly important ones over centuries. Philosophical giants like Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel are not understood quickly; and they are understood differently in different periods. Perhaps it is only now, more than a century and a half after his death, that we can begin to measure Hegel's contribution to epistemology.

A theory that begins with cognition (*Erkennen*) and ends with absolute knowing is intended as an epistemological theory. I believe that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel proposes a coherent, interesting theory that is highly relevant to contemporary concerns with knowledge. In this study, my aim has been to call attention to cognition as a central theme providing conceptual unity to a dizzying variety of topics. Even in Hegel's day, his treatise was not easily understood by his contemporaries. It is certainly more difficult to do so today, when standards of philosophical theory have changed and when allusions that were transparent to his contemporaries require the efforts of specialists to elucidate them.

In an introductory discussion of Hegel's theory of knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, it is not possible also to defend it. At most, I can suggest

its contemporary interest through some very brief remarks about how it relates to the later discussion of knowledge. Obviously, any claim for "relevance" depends on how we understand "epistemology." It cannot be overemphasized that "knowledge" is a historical variable meaning no more than what it means at any given time.¹ Hegel follows Kant in taking what today would be an usually wide view of the matter to include not only theoretical but also practical knowledge.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel makes epistemological contributions to our views of empiricism and of the epistemological subject. If we understand "empiricism" as the view that "knowledge begins with experience," then Hegel refutes both the English variation according to which knowledge arises out of experience and the Kantian variation according to which the cognitive object given in experience represents an independent real. For Hegel, knowledge begins with experience, whose objects do not refer to anything beyond it. Accordingly, he denies the idea, common both to English empiricists such as Bacon and Locke and also to Kant, that we know, or at least can correctly represent, things as they are in independence of us. Yet he remains an empiricist in holding that knowledge begins with experience, in his view the experience of consciousness.

Hegel's refutation of claims to know beyond the limits of experience leads to his reconstruction of the theory of knowledge through a reinterpretation of the cognitive subject as a real human being. Accordingly, he rejects the idea of the subject as a mere epistemological function that is common in the discussion from Descartes to Kant. For he holds that we cannot understand knowledge merely through working out its abstract conditions.

The argument for an approach to knowledge from the perspective of the real human subject is based on two interrelated points. First, he maintains that foundationalist attempts to work out a theory of knowledge (based on a conception of the subject as a mere epistemological concept) must fail, since an adequate account of foundationalism cannot be given. Second, he suggests that (since people are historical beings) our claims to know are always situated within, and hence "justified," or "legitimated," against the background of, a social framework.

We can suggest the interest of Hegel's theory of knowledge against the background of the epistemological discussion in this century. I understand him to be denying that we can

know anything that is not given in experience, as distinguished from an independent reality, and to be further denying epistemological foundationalism. The proximal roots

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of the main contemporary discussion of knowledge lie in Frege, then in Russell, Moore, and the early Wittgenstein, the founders of analytic philosophy. These thinkers carry forward the view, dominant in modern philosophy at least since Descartes, that to know is to know an independent reality. This view, which has recently been restated as the "idea that science, and only science, describes the world as it is in itself, independent of perspective,"² can be illustrated by Donald Davidson's well-known rejection of conceptual schemes.³ In maintaining that we can have no knowledge of an independent reality, Hegel refutes the main epistemological approach of modern times from Descartes, say, to Davidson.

Antifoundationalism without skepticism is Hegel's epistemological legacy as we move into the future. The Young Hegelians' conviction that Hegel brought philosophy to a high point and to an end echoes through the later discussion. An example among many is Heidegger's recent claim to go beyond philosophy to thought. Despite claims to the contrary, Hegel does not end philosophy, although he seriously undermines the widespread approach to knowledge that relies on a minimalist version of cognitive subjectivity. No one can put an end to philosophy that flourishes even as the claim is raised. At this late date, perhaps we can say that a certain kind of philosophy has come to an end. This is a normative idea of philosophy based on the intricate working out of the concern with knowledge through the increasingly evident failure of the foundationalist epistemological strategy that dominates the modern tradition. If philosophy cannot be brought to an end, if it has not reached the end of the end, then perhaps it is nearing the end of the effort to know an independent external reality, or reality as it is. For we can know no more than what is given within human consciousness that can never be compared with an independent external world.

The importance of the failure of foundationalism is clear in the struggle between philosophically "reactionary" thinkers like Chisholm, Apel, and Habermas, who are committed to the restoration of foundationalism or quasi-foundationalism, and postmodernists like Lyotard, Derrida, and Rorty, who favor more or less sophisticated forms of skepticism. The former believe that we can only defend claims to objective truth through some form of foundationalism. The latter hold that such claims are literally indefensible. In denying that there are still any credible overarching tales (*métarecits*), Lyotard implicitly denies that we can justify any epistemological claims at all. Through deconstruction, Derrida shows that any claimed instance of definite reference,

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what he calls presence, is only mistakenly claimed to be such. Rorty, who conflates philosophy in all its forms with analytic philosophy, holds in effect that if analytical foundationalism fails, then philosophy as such fails.

The problem with such writers lies in their continued captivity by the very idea of epistemological foundationalism. Yet philosophy that did not spring into existence with the invention of this epistemological strategy will survive its demise. After Descartes, Hume, Kant, Husserl, and others grasp the cognitive subject through a presupposed, normative conception of epistemology. Still others, including Fichte and Marx in the German idealist tradition, take human being seriously as the real cognitive subject. Yet probably no one has ever taken the human subject more seriously than Hegel in the *Phenomenology*. He shows that we cannot understand knowledge other than from the perspective of human being. He further shows that if we understand the subject as a real human being, hence as historical, then we must understand knowledge as a historical process.

This leads to epistemological relativism and historicism, two aspects of epistemology that are more often rejected out of hand than seriously considered. When we examine epistemology from the vantage point of the real human subject, then we must understand knowledge as relative to whatever larger perspective we currently happen to hold, but which is always susceptible to change. If this is the case, perhaps we can strive to make a new beginning based on human being that is the real historical subject.

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Chapter 1. "Preface"

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For instance, in the preface to a recent scholarly work, H. S. Harris claims that "Hegel's conception of the philosophy of nature is one of his most vital legacies for the present day." See H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), xi. In the foreword to a recent translation of Hegel, J. N. Findlay notes: "It will in fact be plain that Hegel, like Aristotle and Descartes and Whitehead, is one of the great philosophical interpreters of nature, as steeped in its detail as he is audacious in his treatment of it." See Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, viii-ix.

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 Joseph Margolis, *Philosophy of Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984). See, e.g., Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984).
 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust I*, lines 1236-1237: "Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh'ich Rat. und schreibe getrost: im Anfang war die Tat." See also Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk. 6: "Tätig zu sein, sagte er, ist des Menschen erste Bestimmung, und alle Zwischenzeiten, in denen er auszuruhen genötigt ist, sollte er anwenden, eine deutliche Erkenntnis der äusserlichen Dinge zu erlangen, die ihm in der Folge abermals seine Tätigkeit erleichtert."
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 10, 1100a10-30.
 "The Passions of the Soul," art. XXXI, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, I:345-346.
 See, e.g., Joseph Margolis, *Philosophy of Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 21, 27-28, 63, 76, 77.
 John Haugeland, *Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); see also Ron McClamrock, *Existential Cognition: Computational Minds in the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
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See Tom Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx and German Philosophy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).
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 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 2, 1094b9-12.
 See "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), 151.
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 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. and introd. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Meridian, 1956), 287-311.
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 See Norman S. Care and Charles Landesman, eds., *Readings in the Theory of Action* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).
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 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: LLA, 1956), 169.
 Kant, "Der Streit der Fakultäten," in *Kant-Werke*, IX:310.
 See G. E. Lessing, *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft* (Braun-schweig: Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung, 1777).
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 See Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 215.
 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 13, 1368b6; I, 13, 1373b5; I, 13, 1374a19 ff.; I, 14, 1375a15 ff.; I, 15, 1375b7.

Chapter 6. "Spirit"

See the article on "spirit," in Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 128-131. See also "Geist," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), III:154-203; as concerns Hegel's conception of "Geist," see pp. 191-199.

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See, e.g., Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 321-333.
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; and *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

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Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, §20, 20: "This growth of the universality of thought is the absolute value in education [Bildung]."

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Chapter 8. "Absolute Knowing"

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See Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992), 27.
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See "Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio/Neue Erhellung der ersten Grundsätze metaphysischer Erkenntnis," in Kant, *Kant-Werke*, I:401-510.
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 380, p. 317.
Ibid., B 382, p. 317.
J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 117, 149.
Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 116; *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschafts-lehre*, S. 41.
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F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 4: "This deduction of history leads directly to the proof that what we have to regard as the ultimate ground of harmony between the subjective and the objective in action must in fact be conceived as an absolute identity; though to think of this latter as a substantial or personal identity would in no way be better than to posit it in a pure abstraction—an opinion that could be imputed to idealism only through the grossest of misunderstanding."
Ibid., 16.
Ibid., 23; Schelling's emphasis.
Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), I/4, 115.
Ibid., 114.
Ibid., 12.9.
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 Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, 87.
 Ibid., 94; Hegel's emphases.
 Ibid., 97.
 Ibid., 93.
 Ibid., 95.
 Ibid., 90.
 Ibid., 96.
 Ibid., 100.
 Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 56.
 Ibid., 61.
 Ibid., 64.
 The most significant reference in this work occurs in a passage on the relation between states, which Hegel subordinates to absolute spirit as the absolute judge. See *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, §2.59, 2.79. This point presupposes but does not further develop the view of the absolute that Hegel expounds in his other writings.
 Hegel does not discuss the absolute in the second part, devoted to philosophy of nature.
 Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, §213, 2.74.
 Hegel develops this point in the *Science of Logic*, p. 759.
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 Ibid., §236, 292; translation modified.
 Ibid., §237, 2.92.
 See Denise Souche-Dagues, *Hégélianisme et dualisme: Réflexions sur le phénomène* (Paris: Vrin, 1990).
 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §44, 257-274.

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Chapter 9. Hegel's Phenomenology as Epistemology

See Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination*.
 See "Introduction: The Critique of Contemporary Empiricism," in *Challenges to Empiricism*, ed. Harold Morick (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1972), 1-46.
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 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 367, p. 344.
 See J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 2-3.
 See, e.g., A. J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1969).
 Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. 1, chap. 2, 1253a10.
 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX, bk. Theta, esp. 1, 1045b35-1046a11 and 6, 1048a25-b4.
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 See "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), 83-222. For discussion, see chapters 3-5 in Tom Rockmore, *Irrationalism: Lukács and the Marxist View of Reason* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 103-174.
 See Erich Auerbach, *MIMESIS: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1957).
 See Joseph C. Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984).
 See *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels* (1905), in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, ed. Hermann Nohl (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner; Göttingen: Van-denhoek and Ruprecht, 1959).

Chapter 10. An Epistemological Coda

Ayer, an English apostle of the Vienna Circle, realistically acknowledges the historical relativity of standards in noting that "we define a rational belief as one which is arrived at by the methods which we now consider reliable." A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1970), 100.
 See Hilary Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), x.
 See "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 183-198.

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Interest in Hegel, which was already great, now seems to be growing rapidly. Although there are many studies of Hegel, there are relatively few full-length studies of the *Phenomenology* and even fewer detailed commentaries. This is a selected list of works on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, limited to English, French, and German sources, including a few more specialized studies.

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